United Nations A/73/PV.15

General Assembly

Seventy-third session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Saturday, 29 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Gueguen (France), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Address by Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Berdimuhamedov (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, and to wish her success in her important work. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, for his skilled and effective efforts in the position.

The current session of the General Assembly is taking place against a background of complex trends in international politics. In spite of the efforts of the international community, particularly through the United Nations, the situation in a number of regions around the world remains very difficult. Conflict-prone areas have spread, while at the same time the general level of trust and mutual understanding in our views on the pathways and prospects for global development has fallen. In such circumstances, the issue of ensuring comprehensive, solid and long-term security becomes all too apparent and pertinent, laying the responsibility for the destiny of humankind at the door of every State.

We believe that the United Nations is called on to play the main and decisive role in preserving the foundations of our international order on the basis of the principles of mutual respect, equality and peaceful political dialogue. There can be no doubt as to the legitimacy of its mission. It is the only universal international organization designed to ensure multilateral cooperation aimed at strengthening international security and sustainable development. Turkmenistan believes that this session of the General Assembly should help to resolve the crisis of trust and strengthen mutual understanding among the States Members of the United Nations. In that regard Turkmenistan is launching an initiative marking 2019 as a year of peace and trust. Our initiative proposes developing specific measures aimed at reducing tensions and promoting the peaceful political and diplomatic resolution of disputes and clashes by adopting responsible and balanced decisions.

Ensuring long-term security is a key issue for Central Asian States, and one of the most important issues on the regional agenda is the fight against terrorism. With regard to ensuring security and stable development in the Central Asian States, cooperation

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

18-30196 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

on disarmament matters, combating drug trafficking and multilateral economic support for Afghanistan are no less important. In that regard we believe it is crucial to involve Afghanistan in implementing major energy, transport and communications projects as a full-fledged partner. We see that issue as one of strategic importance for Afghanistan and its role in regional and global processes, and one that will help the Afghan people's prosperity and well-being to flourish. We are working steadily towards that goal. My country is working to implement the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline project, building a power supply line and a fibre-optic communications network with the support of international partners and major financial institutions. A new railway leading towards Afghanistan has also been completed. We continue to provide Afghanistan with humanitarian assistance by building social facilities, sending humanitarian aid convoys and training qualified national specialists for various sectors of Afghanistan's economic and social arenas.

Turkmenistan participated actively in the drafting of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and made a number of specific proposals. Following the adoption at the World Summit of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 (see A/70/PV.4), our country was one of the first nations to begin adapting its national plans and social and economic development programmes in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard we have established an appropriate permanent mechanism for cooperation with the United Nations. Turkmenistan's implementation of the SDGs focuses particularly on social aspects. That means such important issues as ensuring food security and improving nutrition, comprehensively promoting a healthy way of life, ensuring full gender equality by guaranteeing rights and opportunities for all women and girls and creating the conditions for comprehensive, equitable and high-quality education.

We are also devoting a great deal of attention to achieving the goal of ensuring the availability and intelligent use of water resources and sanitation for all. Turkmenistan firmly adheres to the principle that water is the common heritage of every people on our planet and that equal and fair access to clean drinking water is a fundamental human right. The development of States on the economic and social fronts, as well as their peoples' levels of well-being and quality of life, is directly dependent on their access to water resources and ability to use them effectively. Equal rights, mutual respect and responsibility should therefore be the main criteria determining relations among the States of Central Asian. In consistently taking that position, Turkmenistan has always declared that issues related to water and energy in our region should be resolved, first, on a basis of generally accepted norms of international law; secondly, by taking the interests of each country into account; and thirdly, with the active participation of international organizations and the United Nations in particular. That is our principled position, and based on it we will continue working to establish effective negotiating mechanisms between States and international entities with a view to arriving at a coordinated approach. I believe firmly that this is the only way we can achieve positive results and ensure a stable and sustainable balance of interests.

One of the major topics of cooperation between the countries of our region and the international community is the problem of saving the Aral Sea. It has long been clear that its preservation cannot be considered merely a problem internal to the region. If we are to succeed in finding a solution to it we need the help of the world community and an innovative, comprehensive international approach involving the active and systematic participation of the United Nations. In that regard, Turkmenistan has begun to implement an initiative formulating a special United Nations programme for the problem of the Aral Sea basin and establishing it as a specific separate area of the Organization's work. I urge Member States to support our proposal, for which the Assembly's resolution 72/273, on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea", adopted by consensus on 12 April, could serve as a good basis.

Another major issue is the Caspian Sea. The signing by the Heads of States of the Caspian Sea on 12 August of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea has opened up the prospects for transforming the Caspian Sea region into an internationally important strategic transit and energy hub, as well as an area for broad investment, trade and economic activity and cooperation. Turkmenistan is ready for meaningful discussions with all interested parties on implementing projects in those areas that are fully economically and commercially feasible, beneficial for all potential participants, capable of significantly helping to

strengthen the security of the continent and long-term in nature. It is no exaggeration to say that investing in such projects is undoubtedly an investment in the future.

We greatly appreciate the effective participation of the United Nations specialized agencies represented in Turkmenistan and in our country's life, dynamic development and people's welfare, and I would like to express our sincere gratitude to their staff for their selfless work. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his tireless personal focus on United Nations cooperation with Turkmenistan and his support to our initiatives and endeavours.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Turkmenistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jan Hamáček, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Hamáček (Czech Republic): Despite all our efforts, 100 years after the end of the First World War we find ourselves in a world in which lasting peace has not yet been universally secured and people are still dying in violent conflicts. The raison d'être of the United Nations is the protection of peace, human rights, justice and social progress. Those values are not a Western instrument. They form universal ideals that all of us, the States Members of the United Nations, should strive for together.

We face many challenges in areas such as the dignity of individuals, global prosperity, and sustainable development, including gender inequality, youth unemployment, global health threats, climate change, violent extremism, terrorism, forced displacement and uncontrolled migration. Furthermore, multilateralism and the rules-based system, which benefit everyone and have long held many of those threats at bay, are increasingly being undermined and questioned. One way that we as policymakers can tackle those challenges is by working to realize the difficult structural and political reforms of the United Nations so as to promote shared global responsibility, robust international cooperation and the restoration of common values.

We all understand the importance of reforming the Security Council in order to reflect the realities of today's world. In recent years, unfortunately, the Council has been characterized by blocking tactics rather than cooperation. Its failure to act on the world's worst atrocities is clearly visible in several brutal ongoing conflicts, from Syria to Yemen. The Secretary-General has already embarked on the challenging endeavour of reforming the United Nations, and the Czech Republic fully supports his efforts. Making the Organization more effective through much-needed reforms in the areas of peace and security, management and the development system will make the United Nations truly relevant to all people and help promote a peaceful, equitable and sustainable world. Accordingly, we should endorse the Secretary-General's work and give his proposals, including their budgetary and financial implications, the strongest possible support.

The vital point of the Secretary-General's reform agenda is its focus on the prevention of conflicts. All of us should work tirelessly work to ensure that crises are contained before they break out and that post-conflict countries are stabilized for the long term. For effective conflict prevention, we should adopt a comprehensive approach to peace and security that treats climate change as a security problem while also advancing sustainable development and promoting human rights.

The Czech Republic took great pride in having the honour of holding the presidency of the Economic and Social Council during its 2017 session. I would like to thank everyone, Member States as well as the Secretariat, for their excellent cooperation. It was an enlightening experience, not just for our presidency team but for our entire Administration.

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are the foundation of our concerted efforts to promote sustainable development, the Czech Republic will continue to champion Sustainable Development Goal 16, not only as a follow-up to our presidency of the Economic and Social Council but mainly as a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We consider peace, justice and functioning institutions our priority and a solid base on which a sustainable future for everyone can be built. In the context of sustainable development, it is also crucial for the United Nations to seek more

synergies among its humanitarian, development and security activities.

Apart from conflict prevention, there should be a special focus on post-conflict stabilization. Those efforts should be visible in the field. To achieve that, more cooperation among the United Nations specialized agencies is required, as well as broader coordination with and between the Member States.

History teaches us that respect for human rights is the best way to prevent conflict and violence. Efforts to realize human rights for all are the best possible investment for a peaceful and prosperous future. Lasting peace and sustainable development cannot be achieved when human rights are abused or violated. And yet the human rights pillar of the United Nations is chronically underfunded and often overlooked. That must change. Human rights are central to my historical experience. The promotion of human rights, both in the bilateral context and on the global scene, remains one of our long-term foreign-policy priorities.

Our efforts to prevent conflict and instability would not be complete without mentioning denuclearization and the fight against terrorism. The Czech Republic, with its Embassy in Pyongyang, is deeply interested in improving the situation on the Korean peninsula. That is why we are following both the inter-Korean dialogue and the dialogue between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with raised expectations and at the highest level.

We need a resolute and coordinated approach to countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, just as we do in fighting terrorism. Although the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has been defeated in large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq, we are aware that it is still active and that other terrorist organizations are also operating worldwide. We must take further steps in the area of international law and finally conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. As President Miloš Zeman suggested at the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session in 2016 (see A/71/PV.12), we call for an internationally recognized definition of terrorism that will emphasizee the criminal responsibility of terrorists worldwide and enable us to hold them accountable.

This year the Czech Republic commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the day that Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia. The experience of the 1968 invasion still resonates strongly, and not just in the Czech Republic, as the moment where many lost faith in the promises of a better world preached by the Soviet Union. That historical time period provides lessons that are still relevant today, and its echoes can be heard in incidents that continue to occur in the world around us.

First, it is still not a given that all countries, including those in Eastern Europe, have the right to choose their foreign-policy orientation without their sovereignty and territorial integrity being threatened. In that context, I would like to once again remind the Assembly that the annexation of Crimea represents a blatant violation of international law.

Secondly, it should not be forgotten that the use of force is allowed by the Charter of the United Nations only in self-defence and when authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter. The United Nations is the sole guarantor of international peace and security. It is only through collective means and within the rules-based international order that the peace and security of all our nations can be achieved.

Thirdly, in cases where States and the international community fail in their shared responsibility to protect people from atrocities, it is imperative to establish accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Accordingly, the Czech Republic firmly supports international criminal justice, and in particular the International Criminal Court (ICC). We welcome the activation of the ICC's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, which we consider to be a deterrent ensuring that such crimes will not be committed in future. In certain cases, however, the ICC does not have jurisdiction, but that should not be seen as a loophole through which perpetrators of atrocities may escape accountability.

For crimes committed in Syria, we support, both politically and through financial contributions, the so-called International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. Not only is accountability a way to bring justice to those suffering in conflicts, it is also a path towards reconciliation and a crucial means for preventing atrocities from recurring.

While the newly independent Czech Republic was admitted to the United Nations 25 years ago, in 1993, this year we are also celebrating the centenary of our

modern statehood and independence, as Czechoslovakia was born out of the crucible of the First World War in 1918. The founder and first President of my country, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, rightly posited that States are sustained only by those ideals from which they were born. The same must be true of the United Nations. We should therefore strive to reinvigorate the founding ideals of this noble Organization. Only then will we succeed in fulfilling the theme of its seventy-third session, making it truly relevant and helpful to all people.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Kommasith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): First of all, I would like to begin by congratulating Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. It is a great pleasure to see a woman presiding over the Assembly. I want to assure her of our full support and cooperation and wish her every success in carrying out her noble duty. I would also like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his successful completion of his tenure as President of the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which promises to leave no one behind, encompasses all of the prerequisites for building a peaceful and prosperous world. In order to meet the lofty goals of the 2030 Agenda, national Governments and the international community have to work hand in hand for its implementation. That requires international peace and security, which creates an environment conducive to economic growth and social progress while enhancing international cooperation and assistance, with priority given to the most vulnerable groups of countries, which are the least-developed countries (LDCs), land-locked developing countries and small island developing States.

Soon after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in order to realize it and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic incorporated the SDG targets into its eighth national five-year socioeconomic development plan, for the period from 2016 to 2020. Given our specific needs, we have gone the extra mile by adopting a national sustainable development goal 18, "Lives safe from unexploded ordnance", in order to address the problems caused by unexploded ordnance.

At the High-level Political Forum in July, the Lao Government presented its first voluntary national review on SDG implementation, which has seen important progress and emerging constraints in the past few years. While we have seen positive momentum towards achieving the SDGs, bringing us closer to graduation from our LDC status, we remain vulnerable to external shocks. This year we have been witnessing an increasing intensity in climate change and natural disasters, causing heavy losses and damage to the lives and property of people in various parts of the world. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is no exception. We have been severely affected by natural disasters, especially extensive flooding across the country, the worst-ever natural disaster in our history. To date 2,409 of 8,464 villages in 115 of 148 districts have been affected by massive flooding. The exact costs of the losses and damage are as yet unknown, as a post-disaster needs assessment will be conducted in the next few months. The calamity has had a severe impact on the livelihoods of people in the affected areas.

With the assistance of friendly countries and international organizations, including international non-governmental organizations and individuals, the Lao Government has been providing those affected with emergency relief in the form of temporary shelters, food and health care. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the friendly countries and international organizations that have given us valuable assistance during this difficult time.

Against that backdrop, it is more crucial than ever for world leaders to honour their commitments pledged under the Paris Agreement. Within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), great importance has been accorded to the issue of climate change and disaster-risk management. We also very much appreciate the continued support of the United Nations for the ASEAN-United Nations Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management, for the period from 2016 to 2020, which is designed to address climate change and disaster management and respond to the effects of the changing climate on socioeconomic development in years to come.

Addressing the scourge of transnational crime requires concerted effort at all levels. In that context,

the Lao People's Democratic Republic remains seriously committed to working closely with the international community on the fight against illicit drugs, the illegal trade in wildlife and trafficking in persons, among other things. The Government has adopted a drug-control master plan for the period from 2016 to 2020, as we implement the ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities against Illicit Drugs for the period from 2016 to 2025 so as to realize the vision of a drug-free ASEAN as one of the region's high-priority agenda items. We are also pleased to support the Global Call to Action on the World Drug Problem initiated by the President of the United States.

The Lao Government has spared no effort in combating the heinous and inhumane crime of human trafficking by adopting various laws, regulations and national action plans to combat trafficking in persons and by becoming a signatory to numerous regional agreements and memorandums of understanding, including the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which seek to prevent and combat human trafficking.

The United Nations needs to be strengthened so that it can respond effectively to the challenges we face today. We are pleased with the Secretary-General's initiatives on reforming and repositioning the United Nations, with the aim of improving the capacity of the United Nations to meet the needs in the current environment. In that context, we reiterate our view that development issues must remain a core and integral part of the United Nations and its States Members and a top priority for them, alongside the promotion of international peace, security and human rights and an emphasis on the importance of enhancing the United Nations system's ability to deliver on its mandate.

We are concerned about the continued decline in contributions to the core funding of United Nations development agencies and the United Nations Development Programme on the ground. My delegation would therefore like to call once again on donor countries and development partners to fulfil their official development assistance commitment of at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national income.

We all acknowledge that peace and security are prerequisites for the socioeconomic development of all nations. We must therefore maintain and promote peace and security at all costs. Past experience has shown that settling disputes by peaceful means is the best way to ensure the durable peace that is essential for a nation's sustainable development. Accordingly, it is incumbent on the international community to continue to build mutual trust and confidence in an effort to jointly overcome their current challenges and seek peaceful solutions to the disputes and conflicts that we are witnessing in various regions of the world.

Against that backdrop, we welcomed the recent historic summit in June between the leaders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America, which constituted an important milestone in the relations between the two countries. We also welcomed the third summit between the leaders of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, with the objective of striving not only to improve bilateral relations between the two countries but also to address the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We hope that such positive momentum will be strengthened, thereby contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability and denuclearization in the region as a whole.

Despite those positive developments on the Korean peninsula, my delegation is concerned about the lack of progress on the Palestinian question. We hope that its long-overdue resolution can be achieved by peaceful means with the goal of arriving at a two-State solution whereby Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

On another note, in an era of interdependence, international cooperation and engagement are key factors to peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence. Enforced isolation and the imposition of sanctions on any country will not necessarily benefit the international community. On the contrary, it will result in losses for all and increased hostility. My delegation therefore urges for an end to the embargo on Cuba. We also want to call on the international community to uphold and further strengthen multilateralism that promotes cooperation rather than confrontation, which remains one of the core values of our only universal organization, the United Nations.

Ms. Scott (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I would like to conclude by expressing my support for the theme of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly — "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for

peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" — which is indeed pertinent to the current global situation and the work of the United Nations. However, making all internationally agreed goals and commitments a reality requires strong political will and firm commitment and support to multilateralism, particularly in terms of making the United Nations stronger so that it can effectively serve and respond to the needs of all Member States.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

Mr. Elrington (Belize): At the outset, I would like to express the sympathies of the Government and the people of Belize with the Government and the people of Indonesia in the light of the recent devastating earthquake and tsunami that has killed more than 400 people. I also want to express our solidarity with Barbados and Saint Lucia, fellow Caribbean Community countries, which are recovering from Tropical Storm Kirk, as well as with the countries of the Eastern Caribbean that have been affected by an earthquake in the past few days.

This year marks the thirty-seventh anniversary of Belize's independence. Belizeans have now enjoyed almost four uninterrupted decades of freedom, peace and democracy in our sovereign independent nation. During that period our leaders have succeeded in making modest gains in our nation's quest for sustainable development. They did so notwithstanding the fact that our country has been the subject of an active territorial claim — a poisoned colonial chalice — that predates our independence by approximately a half century. Because of that claim, our nation's birth was protracted and fraught with difficulty. All Belizeans who are familiar with the history of our journey to independence give the United Nations great credit for it, and rightly so. It was resolution 1514 (XV), adopted on 14 December 1960, that paved the way for all colonial peoples to be able to make the transition to independence. Belize is a beneficiary of that seminal resolution and of the subsequent United Nations resolutions adopted between 1971 and 1980 that mandated the British to grant it early independence.

On 21 September 1981, Belize achieved its independence, and the United Nations immediately welcomed our fledgling democratic State as its newest Member, thereby affirming its sovereignty and its territorial integrity. Yet 37 years later the Guatemalan territorial claim remains unresolved. Indeed, efforts to resolve it before the International Court of Justice eluded the British Government for nearly 80 years. However, Belizeans will soon — and thankfully — decide whether the current opportunity to bring about a definitive settlement of the claim, which has long sown fear in the hearts of all Belizeans and has hamstrung our nation's development potential, will in fact be seized.

The significance of the 15 April 2017 Guatemalan referendum, which ratified the decision of the Guatemalan Government in 2008 to have its claim relating to my country adjudicated by the Court, should not be lost. For, in carrying out the referendum, Guatemala gave effect to its obligation under the special agreement that both our countries signed in good faith. At the same time, there remains one pending issue for us to agree on. In continuing that spirit of good faith, we urge our neighbour Guatemala to agree on a procedure or protocol for confidence-building measures on the Sarstoon River, our southern boundary with that country, in order to facilitate the management of incidents of the kind that gave rise to heightened tensions between our two countries in 2015 and 2016.

Belizeans are now on the cusp of a truly rare and felicitous moment in our nation's history. Our voting public, in the finest democratic fashion, now has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to determine the fate of our country. The Government of Belize has designated 10 April 2019 as the date for our national referendum. On that day all registered voters will be entitled to cast their ballots, thereby signalling either their consent to or rejection of having the Guatemalan claim resolved once and for all by the International Court of Justice. In preparation for that historic plebiscite, our Government has embarked on a nationwide public awareness campaign to ensure that all Belizeans are fully informed about the claim and why it should be referred to the Court for resolution.

While working to end the Guatemalan claim and thereby enhance our national security, my Government continues to discharge its core duty of promoting economic development, job creation, education and health care for all citizens. To that end, we are making major efforts to implement our growth and sustainable development strategy, which is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. In that endeavour the United Nations development system is partnering

with us through the Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework.

We are also working diligently to address the scourge of the poverty that persistently afflicts our country and our citizens. Current statistics show that approximately 43 per cent of Belizeans live below the poverty line, with 16 per cent experiencing extreme poverty. Initiatives aimed at dealing with the problem include three new programmes that specifically target indigent families. In addition to financial benefits, beneficiaries are provided with direct economic, social and psychological support as well as job readiness courses to prepare them for gainful employment. Under a food pantry programme, poor families are also provided with basic food baskets at subsidized rates.

An alarming knowledge gap is rapidly widening between the few fortunate Belizeans who are well educated, skilled and poised to succeed in a fiercely competitive, knowledge-based twenty-first century environment and the many who are being left behind without the skills and wherewithal to obtain employment, become self-employed or even to engage legitimately and meaningfully in civic life. It is indispensable to Belize's development, prosperity, security and democracy that we work to close that knowledge gap as soon as possible and ensure that all our young people are equipped to successfully face the myriad challenges of the twenty-first century.

To that end, and with a view to increasing access to education, our Government is building 35 new schools. Since the launch of a high school subsidy, we have seen a discernible improvement in transition rates from primary to secondary school for students identified as having academic or socioeconomic challenges. All students in the country's districts and rural areas with the highest incidence of poverty automatically qualify for the subsidy. This year the Government is expanding its reach with the intention of minimizing the disparity in enrolment and achievement between students from rural and urban areas.

In addition, the Government is taking new measures to assist at-risk young people from coming into conflict with our laws. We recently launched the Belize Youth Challenge Programme, which concentrates on teaching young people discipline, personal organization and teamwork, as well as skills in technical and vocational areas, and on encouraging them to become responsible, patriotic and productive citizens. With a view to enhancing the delivery of health services, the Government has initiated steps for the construction of a modern hospital in the Toledo district.

Next year will mark 25 years of the Organization's support for the small island developing States (SIDS) agenda. Belize joins in the call for renewed commitment to the special case of SIDS and for systematically targeted support to respond to their particular needs, such as those identified by the Caribbean SIDS in the San Pedro Declaration, adopted in Belize in August 2017. The destructive hurricanes and storms that ravage the Caribbean year after year are a constant reminder of the true scale of thevulnerability facing SIDS in the Caribbean. We hope that through the implementation of his reform plan the Secretary-General will explore ways by which the United Nations development system can better accelerate the implementation of the SIDS agenda.

Our Government has made building resilience an integral part of its development planning and is implementing a national climate resilience investment plan to ensure that the impact of climate change is integrated into national investment planning across all sectors and ministries. The Government has also enacted mangrove regulations and instituted an indefinite moratorium on offshore drilling, which marks the first time that a developing country has taken such a major step to protect its marine resources from oil exploration and extraction. Belize will also be banning single-use plastics and Styrofoam as of April 2019.

I am happy to share that UNESCO's World Heritage Committee recently decided to remove the Belize barrier reef, the largest in the western hemisphere, from the World Heritage in Danger list, after taking into account several measures that our Government has implemented to ensure its protection and well-being.

Thanks to its geography, Belize is located along a path frequented by criminal elements of every kind as they journey from South to North to traffic their illicit wares, a fact that has had tragic consequences for the peace and safety of Belizeans. Over the past decade the problem has led to a dramatic increase in our homicide rates, with each year being deadlier than the one before. Tackling transnational organized crime in Central America requires a truly cooperative and collaborative approach, along with multilateral support. Thankfully, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

have been important and faithful collaborators with our Government in implementing programmes to address underlying social causes and build the capacity of protective and judicial institutions.

What I have spoken of here makes it clear that the United Nations is of inestimable value and importance to Belize. Like other States Members of the United Nations, Belize is well aware of its limitations, but it is not without anxiety that we note the fact that some of its core values are under sustained attack, while organs that have been painstakingly erected to reinforce the rule of law are being derided and international legal frameworks are being cast aside in unilateral acts of political expediency.

Paradoxically, the criticisms and attacks are being unleashed at a time when the world is most in need of a robust United Nations, as nations large and small are being buffeted by catastrophic occurrences, both natural and man-made, at a pace never before witnessed by humankind. While we appreciate the need for reform of the institutions of the United Nations, we are therefore equally mindful of its unique and invaluable role in a world that is becoming increasingly more perilous. Belize fears that, if we stand in silence or fail to speak out in its defence and in defence of multilateralism, we risk repeating the tragedies of the past, and we forsake the very values that the United Nations stands for. Indeed, we forsake our very responsibility to humankind. History will measure us by our actions, not by our words.

Belize supports all initiatives that seek to put an end to the conflicts languishing across the globe that lead to senseless death, destruction and suffering. We echo the cry of Palestinians for an independent State, within its 1967 borders and with all attendant rights. We pray that the International Court of Justice will bring a speedy end to Venezuela's claim over Guyanian territory. Belize remains firm and unwavering in its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana. We also pray that the civil strife in Venezuela will soon end.

Belize joins the call for an end to the unilateral, economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba and its people, which violates international law and serves no just purpose. The blockade has failed to pressure the Government into submission. Indeed, it has had the opposite effect. Leveraging its inexhaustible reserves of patriotism and creativity, Cuba has been able to survive and thrive to a degree that has garnered international recognition for its resilience, its selfless generosity and its signal gains in public health, education and the arts. Surely it is high time, after nearly 58 years, to lift the blockade so that Cuba can reach the highest level of its extraordinary potential.

In a similar spirit of determination, Belize reiterates its plea on behalf of the 23 million people of Taiwan for a new approach to Taiwan's participation in the United Nations system. Taiwan is the twenty-second-largest economy in the world. It is a vibrant democracy that has fully embraced international norms and standards. Yet, despite global recognition of its successes and the readiness of States Members of the United Nations to conduct business with this fast-growing economy, the Organization has cut them off. It has gone so far as to refuse to recognize the legitimacy of Taiwanese passports, thereby even preventing Taiwanese tourists from entering its premises as visitors. It effectively uses resolution 2758 (XXXVI), of 1971, as a political and humanitarian embargo on Taiwan. In our view, no such embargo has any place in the United Nations.

The successes of the United Nations have never been won by focusing on what divides us. Had we done so we would not have achieved a landmark human rights declaration, a transformative development agenda or a constitution for the oceans and seas, and we certainly would not have a framework agreement for collective action on climate change. Focusing on what unites us can bring us further along the path towards addressing the gaps in the law of the sea to guarantee that fairness extends even into areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Similarly, we can take a final decision in Poland to give full effect to the Paris Agreement and mobilize momentum for the level of ambition and the magnitude of support needed to avoid irreversible adverse effects of climate change. Belize is ready to commit to raising our ambition and urges others to join us in 2020 to set the world on the right path towards achieving the Paris Agreement goals.

In conclusion, in our humble defence of what rightly belongs to us, Belize has weathered many trials. We see our struggle reflected in those of many others who have been denied the full enjoyment of their rights and the full achievement of their potential. However, we are secure in our belief that right will triumph and that in the end, our shared values of justice and our belief in human dignity will bring us ever closer to the

resolutions the world needs. We therefore march on, in service of the United Nations and all the peoples of the world, armed with our values and an enduring hope for peace and security.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea.

Mr. Mohammed (Eritrea): Let me join previous speakers in conveying our congratulations to the President for her election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Every year, this forum provides a suitable platform for Member States to broach critical issues of international peace and security and their ramifications for national and human development. In that spirit, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to key matters of paramount importance to my country and our region as a whole.

As those present are all aware, Eritrea and Ethiopia recently signed a historic peace agreement ending a dark two-decade chapter of war, constant tension and strife. This historic achievement, even if it is almost 16 years late, will enable both countries to funnel their resources, potential and positive energy exclusively towards much-needed development. It has already given the peoples of both countries hope and optimism. The positive dividend for regional peace and security that it has generated is so clear that it does not need emphasis. It is clearly attested to by the new frameworks of all-around cooperation that have been set in motion in the past two months or are in the offing at the regional level. Eritrea would like to express its gratitude to the several countries that contributed in various ways and demonstrated their political goodwill in support of the success of the historical process under way.

Let me now turn to a perplexing injustice that has afflicted my country for almost a decade. I am referring to the unwarranted sanctions that were imposed on Eritrea in 2009 and 2011. With the positive winds of peace blowing in our region, several Security Council members are now calling for the immediate lifting of those deplorable sanctions. However, the diplomatic discourse is not completely coherent. As it happens, some countries are coming up with procedural and other pretexts and preconditions with the apparent aim of moving the goalposts and maintaining the illegal sanctions on Eritrea. As an aggrieved party that has been on the receiving end of a miscarriage of justice for nine long years, Eritrea cannot and will not plead for clemency or magnanimity. The people and the Government of Eritrea will continue to stand up for their rights until justice is achieved and the wrongs done to them have been redressed.

The transgressions against Eritrea are in many ways symptomatic of the hubris and perverse power games that have largely governed international relations in recent times. The spiralling crises, instability, wars and conflicts that have raged, and continue to do so, in various parts of the world are the inevitable consequences of an absence of justice. They are the attendant outcomes of an international power imbalance. When the rule of law is suppressed and supplanted by the logic of force, and when the global power balance is compromised, the inevitable outcomes are intractable crises and escalating wars.

It was against that disconcerting global backdrop that Eritrea was first victimized and targeted by unlawful and unfair sanctions, on 23 December 2009. I will not burden the Assembly with the details of the incontrovertible facts of how and why the sanctions were imposed, since all the relevant information, including confidential communications, WikiLeaks and all, has long since been in the public domain and available for scrutiny. However, to sum up, the interplay of forces and factors that resulted in the sanctions was this.

First, the principal architects of the sanctions were United States Administrations that felt that they could use their unassailable power and raw coercion to ram punitive measures against a small country and people through the Security Council in order to advance their misguided regional agenda. In that context, is worth remembering that certain officials in those Administrations had considered imposing similar sanctions on Eritrea in 1999 and 2000, at the height of the border war with Ethiopia, in order to impose asymmetrical arrangements by coercive means. The fabricated charges peddled in 2009 were in fact improvised attempts at implementing an overall agenda.

The second reason for the imposition of sanctions was the inability of the United Nations system to prevent such wrongs from happening, in particular systemic flaws and political horse-trading in the operations of the Security Council. In that context, too, one must remember that the Council failed to take any meaningful action against Ethiopia, despite the fact that previous Ethiopian regimes had flagrantly

violated the Charter of the United Nations and the Algiers Agreement guaranteed by the same Security Council when they refused to abide by the final and binding decisions of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission of 13 April 2002.

A third factor that drove the imposition of sanctions was the fact that the Governments in place at that time served the agenda of the major Powers. In the case of Eritrea, the principal architects of the sanctions against it resorted to regional Trojan horses designed to mask their resolutions with an African face.

The sanctions imposed on Eritrea for the past nine years have resulted in considerable economic damage to the country and unnecessary hardships for our people. The related smear and defamation campaigns have done immeasurable damage to the country's reputation and to the prospects and potential of investment. Perhaps the most significant damage is the regional instability and insecurity that this state of affairs has bred and exacerbated. The actual costs incurred and the opportunities forfeited, at both the national and regional levels, are therefore huge.

In the light of the widely acclaimed peace and cooperation that have been brokered in the region, the fact that certain countries are choosing to ignore the stark truth and prolong the sanctions regime in Eritrea is astounding. Over the past six decades, the Eritrean people have waged a long and difficult struggle to advance the cause of justice and foster a climate that is conducive to mutual security and stability in the region. Those robust convictions and that legacy have enabled them to withstand all the wrongs and scars imposed on them by the unfair sanctions. Through their characteristic resilience and hard toil, they have now vanquished the injustices inflicted on them.

In conclusion, as I stressed earlier, the people of Eritrea have not committed any crime or transgression that impels them to seek clemency. As such, they are not only calling for the immediate rescinding of the sanctions but they are also asking, and deserve, amends for the damages incurred and opportunities forfeited.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Urbino José Gonçalves Botelho, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Communities of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Botelho (Sao Tome and Principe) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, let me join all those who have preceded me at this rostrum in conveying, on behalf of the Government and the people of Sao Tome and Principe, our sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Indonesia, as well as the families affected by the earthquake that happened recently in that friendly country.

It is with a great sense of honour and satisfaction that I address the General Assembly for the first time as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Communities of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe. It is with great pleasure that I address my first words to Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, whom I congratulate on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, and to whom I express our support for the course of her term, which we believe will be very successful. We note that she is only the fourth woman to undertake this noble function, and we hope that those numbers will increase in the future in the name of the greater inclusion of women in positions of importance in the Organization.

I also congratulate the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, on conducting the work of the previous session of the General Assembly judiciously, zealously and selflessly in an extremely difficult international context.

I also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who passed away in August. He was a man who dedicated his life to making the world a more peaceful place and worked tirelessly for that purpose, and always with a great sense of our humanity. We must preserve his legacy by continuing to strengthen our Organization as the ultimate and overall guarantor of the quest for peaceful, durable and consensus solutions, legitimized by international law, in order to achieve the desired goals of peace, security, stability and progress for all.

We welcome the choice of the theme for this session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". Our Organization is indeed facing very complex challenges, for which it is called to provide effective, concrete and comprehensive responses that are truly relevant to all people.

Let us emphasize the issue of migration, on which the global leadership of the United Nations must constantly foster dialogue among nations seeking

global solutions, promoting concerted policies to host refugees and supporting their countries of origin to better address this global problem, which often has devastating consequences for those who, in their quest for better living conditions, are exposed to flagrant injustices everywhere.

If we really want peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, our efforts must persist in search of solutions not only to those problems but also in negotiating to mitigate the effects of the armed conflicts raging throughout the world and to prevent the emergence and escalation of regional tensions, which can in turn generate others. We therefore strongly appeal from this rostrum for ongoing dialogue aimed at peacefully resolving the tensions that we are seeing all over the planet and the conflicts that continue to claim thousands of innocent lives, especially in Syria. We also continue to call for an understanding to be reached in the Central African Republic so that negotiations can put an end to a conflict that has harmed thousands of people in a country where the refugee situation has led to a serious humanitarian crisis.

We warmly commend our sister Republic of Guinea-Bissau for scheduling legislative elections for November and express our hope for their success, as we are certain that they will mark a new era of harmony and prosperity, along with a resumption of the regular functioning of its democratic institutions. We also commend the Democratic Republic of the Congo for scheduling general elections in December and sincerely hope that they will be free, transparent and fair and held in a peaceful and harmonious environment.

We are also pleased to note the positive steps in the reconciliation process between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as among the warring parties in the Republic of South Sudan, and we strongly encourage them to continue on that path.

With regard to the situation in the Sahara, we express our support for the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy in their efforts to relaunch the political process on a basis of the parameters set by the Security Council in 2007, and we welcome the Council's adoption of its resolution 2414 (2018), which calls for efforts to achieve a political, pragmatic, realistic and enduring solution to the dispute. We also congratulate Morocco on its serious and credible efforts to find a political and definitive solution to the region's issues, and we support its initiative in favour of autonomy.

The Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe welcomes the historic developments on the Korean peninsula and calls on all those involved to continue the dialogue and negotiations in the interests of all the parties concerned, with a view to achieving the development of the entire region.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, we call for dialogue and a continuation of efforts to find a peaceful and negotiated solution, respecting the right of the Palestinian people to decide their own destiny, in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law.

Along those same lines, we renew our call for continued efforts to be made to normalize relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America so that we can see the trade embargo that has been an obstacle to the progress of that friendly country for decades lifted as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, we must once again express our regret that terrorist acts continue to claim so many lives around the world. We will always firmly and vehemently condemn such heinous acts, which show no respect for human life, will always earn our firmest and most vehement condemnation. We also want to take this opportunity to condemn once again the terrorist acts of Boko Haram on the territory of our neighbour and brother the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Their harmful consequences continue to undermine the development and security of the entire Gulf of Guinea region. Likewise, we strongly condemn the terrorist acts that have caused so much suffering to the martyred peoples of the Sahel region, and in particular those of Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso. We reaffirm the strong commitment of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe to actively collaborating with its regional and international partners in all initiatives aimed at eradicating this problem from our societies. Only by acting together can we truly build peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, as the theme of this session suggests.

The leader[illegible] role of our Organization undoubtedly goes hand in hand with actions that bring together efforts to combat climate change. We are confronted every day with the devastating effects of climate change around the world. Natural disasters are occurring on an increasingly broad scale and with growing intensity, leading to loss of life, especially in the least developed regions of the world. Global efforts must continue

under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and they must be a shared responsibility for everyone, because it is up to all of us to safeguard the future for coming generations.

At the beginning of my statement, I alluded to the most recent tragic example of the effects of climate change in Indonesia. It is therefore urgent to implement the provisions of the Paris Agreement, so that the necessary technical, financial and human resources are properly directed towards the immensity of the task at hand. We therefore hope that the forthcoming twenty-forth session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Katowice, Poland, will be very successful and that the dialogue there will in fact make it possible to implement the Agreement. Sao Tome and Principe will do everything in its power to advocate for the crucial importance of shared and universal efforts to adopt the necessary policies in that regard.

We also want to underline our support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose achievement will truly benefit the whole world. The support of all the specialized agencies of the United Nations will be required for formulating and implementing the policies necessary for the achievement of the SDGs. Sao Tome and Principe would like to point out that we have been putting this type of collaboration into practice in our country.

We also want to highlight and welcome the continued efforts of the African Union to implement its inclusive Agenda 2063, whose achievement, we believe, will enable African countries to throw off the chains of poverty, thereby bringing their peoples a better future. The spirit that has guided us this far must continue to be strengthened, taking into account our particular specificities and constantly keeping in mind what unites us, which is the quest for the well-being and development of the whole of Africa.

Sao Tome and Principe, a small developing island State, with all the constraints that this condition entails, is pursuing a policy adapted to its realities while maintaining respect for its multicultural diversity and human rights. With an economy that is very vulnerable to external shocks, the current Government has designed and is working to achieve an ambitious transformation agenda by 2030, closely following the guidelines of both the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

It has been a difficult task, but we would like to put on record the support that we have received from organizations that have closely collaborated with the Government and our important bilateral partners, whose support the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe sincerely acknowledges. Since our task is still ongoing, we would very much appreciate being able to continue to count on those contributions.

On 7 October, Sao Tome and Principe will hold legislative, local and regional elections. We invite the international community as independent observers to join us once again in witnessing the strength, quality and maturity of our democracy, which the elections will further consolidate.

The United Nations must assume its role as a leader in the global efforts to bring development to all peoples, in the unceasing pursuit of peaceful solutions to the ongiong conflicts in the world, in combating climate change, reducing inequalities, promoting gender equality and equity, fighting the scourge of terrorism and hatred based on race, sexual orientation and religious beliefs, promoting intercultural dialogue among peoples, and in the uncompromising defence of peace and human rights. These values, which we are certain we all share, must be continually upheld, and all our efforts must be conducive to their protection and reinforcement in a spirit of frank and open dialogue that benefits all.

The Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe also maintains and reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the ideals of peace and fraternity among peoples, and will always strive for close collaboration in our efforts to identify shared responsibilities and find common solutions to our common problems, with a view to building more prosperous, peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, pursuant to the ideals of the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sidiki Kaba, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Living Abroad of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Kaba (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, the President of the Republic of Senegal, and his Government, I would like to express my warm congratulations to the President on her election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Beyond Member States' judicious choice of her and her country, Ecuador, it is all women of the world who are honoured. I would

like to convey Senegal's sustained tribute to them for their invaluable contributions and tireless fight for the well-being of humankind. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the work of her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák.

I wish Secretary-General António Guterres every success in the reforms he is undertaking to give our Organization the means to better meet the new demands for momentum and efficiency of our times. I believe it is that ongoing concern to reform the United Nations and devote more tools and resources to it in order to respond to the legitimate expectations and aspirations of peoples that represents the interests and the high impact of the theme of this session, entitled "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies".

That current and relevant theme gives us an opportunity to assess our collective action in the light of the noble ideals of peace, security, stability, respect for human rights and sustainable prosperity, nourished by the founding fathers of the United Nations, in order to better understand the various challenges of our times in a troubled world undergoing profound change. These global challenges, including terrorism, extremist, xenophobic and racist abuses, poverty, migration, global warming and market regulation, require that we find comprehensive and inclusive solutions to them through multilateralism.

By its very nature, the United Nations is the seat and embodiment of that multilateralism. It remains the only forum where concerted solutions of universal scope can be conceived and developed. In addition, out of fidelity to the historic and current calling of the United Nations, it is more than ever incumbent on us to deepen our anchor in multilateralism in order to irreversibly establish the ideal of a better world where human beings remain at the heart of our concerns.

The world today is marked by growing pessimism about the effectiveness of the United Nations, which is sometimes rightly or wrongly accused of abandoning its task and being unable to provide adequate responses to our peoples' problems and the acute crises that seriously threaten our planet and life on earth. In that context, it is up to us to prove, if it is still necessary to do so, that the United Nations remains an essential platform in the conduct of world affairs. Its failure is everyone's failure, but its success is also everyone's success.

To improve the effectiveness of the Organization, we must overcome our ideological and political differences with a view to building a stronger United Nations, which will guarantee the effectiveness of multilateralism and among other things enable it to promote human rights, sustainable development and the advent of a world free of fear and poverty, an ideal that remains humankind's highest aspiration. The achievement of sustainable development in its triple dimensions — economic, social and environmental — should also guide our collective actions. That shared goal should continue to drive us forward, so that we can honour the commitments we made in September 2015 to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is equally important to conclude the Doha Round of negotiations and agree on fair, democratic and sustainable trade rules, taking into account the interests of developing countries, particularly in Africa. Mutually beneficial trade that protects investment, pays a fair price for raw materials and generates shared prosperity is more important than ever. We also need an instrument to stop the tax evasion and illicit financial flows that undermine the African continent's development efforts.

Furthermore, we must come to an agreement on issues related to climate change. In this regard, I would like to reiterate my country's support for the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, to which it remains committed, as well as to the fight against desertification and coastal erosion, in particular. As an African and coastal country that is particularly vulnerable to climate change, Senegal reiterates its call for increasing the endowment of the Green Climate Fund, with a view to giving States such as ours, which contribute less pollution and are more exposed to climate change, the opportunity to undertake appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures. Similarly, it would be to the public good to agree on environmental issues and work to strengthen the international legal framework in that area through the adoption of a global pact for the environment. The same spirit of consensus should also prevail in such matters as financing for development, disarmament and the fight against terrorism.

To make the Organization more fit for purpose, we must complete the reform processes under way so that it can adapt to the new global political configurations and challenges of this world, which is totally different from the one into which the United Nations was born. That is why in particular we should show greater

political will on finally agreeing on Security Council reform by correcting the historical injustice suffered by Africa, which remains the only continent without a permanent seat on the Council.

With that same determination, we should also work harder to realize the right of the Palestinian people to a viable State with East Jerusalem as its capital, coexisting in peace with the State of Israel, within secure and internationally recognized and guaranteed borders.

Furthermore, we believe that the adoption of a global compact on migration that addresses the opportunities and challenges in that area is crucial and would be beneficial for a migratory population that is estimated at 3 per cent of the world's population, or more than 200 million people. In short, United Nations action should be reoriented and its power strengthened on a global scale, or we will never be able to achieve the ideals of peace, prosperity, social justice and friendship among peoples enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

For a United Nations that is close to the people and that serves our nations, we must successfully meet the challenge of providing sustainable development. In that regard, I want to echo the appeal made by the international community when it met in February in Dakar for the Global Partnership for Education. Senegal hopes that the pledges made on that occasion to mobilize $3.1 billion for the strategic sector of education will be honoured so that we can lift thousands of children, especially girls, out of the darkness of ignorance and into the light of knowledge.

My country accords great priority to improving the situation of women and young people. That is why we are implementing bold social programmes within the framework of our plan for an emerging Senegal by 2035, so as to ensure their empowerment and responsibility.

My country also remains committed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 6, on water. In that regard, I would like to remind the Assembly that in 2021 Senegal will host the ninth World Water Forum. Senegal has also been chosen to lead UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme and to chair the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River, which remains a model worldwide and is recognized as an excellent example of peaceful cross-border water management.

Senegal was honoured by President Macky Sall's appointment to be a prominent member of the High-level Panel on Water, which was set up jointly by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the World Bank and whose theme will be "Water, Peace, Security". That theme was included on the agenda of the Security Council for the first time during Senegal's presidency of the Council in November 2016.I would therefore like to reiterate our gratitude for the confidence that has been placed in Senegal within those frameworks, and to solicit the support of all for the success of the ninth World Water Forum. I am also pleased to note that Dakar will host the third iteration of the International Conference on the Emergence of Africa, on 17 and 18 January 2019. It will be a great opportunity to outline innovative economic and social development programmes.

It is also an appropriate time to commend the successful partnership model between Senegal and the United Nations Development Programme, especially in the implementation of the emergency community development programme, launched by President Macky Sall, which, in accordance with the principle of leaving no one behind, will make it possible to transform our rural populations' living conditions. Senegal is willing to share its experience in that area.

I would like to inform members of Senegal's wish to run for the presidency of the Human Rights Council in 2019. We have already obtained the endorsement of the African Union and are counting on the valuable support of those here to help our candidacy for that important post. I am also pleased to invite members to the fifth iteration of the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, to be held on 5 and 6 November on the theme of "Peace and security in Africa: the challenges of sustainable stability and development". I would like to ask everyone to participate in order to make that major event a success.

In conclusion, let us remember that at its founding, the United Nations symbolized humankind's most fervent hopes. Today it embodies them more than ever. It remains the only global institution whose legitimacy and competence derive from its universal composition and its mandate covering the three fundamental pillars of international peace and security, development and human rights. To take the full measure of our historical responsibilities and the hopes placed in the United Nations is therefore to make it an Organization at the

exclusive service of Member States, their populations and humankind in all its diversity.

I would therefore like to share the heartfelt cry of the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan — peace be with him — to whom I want to pay a sincere tribute. He said,

> "But let us not forget why the United Nations matters. It matters only to the extent that it can make a useful contribution to solving the problems and accomplishing the tasks I have just outlined ... If we lose sight of that point, the United Nations will have little or no role to play in the twenty-first century." (*A/54/PV.94, pp. 3-4*)

I therefore urge the international community to continue its efforts to ensure the effective realization of our shared ideal of a better world for all, so that that terrible but lucid warning of the possible uselessness of our Organization does not become a cruel and destructive reality, frustrating humankind's most beautiful hope.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kalla Ankourao, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Living Abroad of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Ankourao (Niger) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President on her election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I would also like to extend my sincere greetings to everyone here, as well as to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák and his team on their excellent work during the previous session.

I would like to express my country's gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres for his commitment to serving the United Nations, and to reaffirm the Niger's support for the continuation of the reforms he has courageously undertaken to adapt our shared Organization to the demands and challenges of modern times. The challenges, as we all know, are certainly enormous. But thanks to his determination and his excellent team, we believe that we will be able to achieve the expected results. In that regard, I would like to assure him of my delegation's full support.

By giving this session the theme "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", we have been both provided with a timely reminder of the profound motives that led to the creation of the United Nations and called on to renew our confidence in it. My delegation can therefore only welcome that appropriate choice of theme in a world facing multiple challenges, such as terrorism, violent extremism, climate change, migration and poverty, all of which require greater international cooperation and responsible engagement on the part of all of us. In that regard, the Niger believes that the United Nations remains a valuable and irreplaceable organization, not only for promoting international peace and security but also for responding effectively to the various challenges facing our States. In other words, my country prioritizes multilateralism and the unifying role of the United Nations. Our combined efforts and resources for reaching common solutions remain the best alternative in our efforts to ensure peace, security and the harmonious development for humankind.

Concerning the issue of migration, the Niger welcomes the finalization of the draft text of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, the first-ever international agreement initiated by the United Nations on managing migration. Combating irregular migration and other shameful practices such as the illegal smuggling of migrants and human trafficking has been the focus of many international meetings in recent years. During those meetings, many commitments were made to eradicating those scourges. In 2016, in order to implement those commitments, the Niger outlined and implemented an operational doctrine based on balanced legislation and commensurate regulatory measures, which have enabled us to deliver concrete results. For example, between October 2016 and January of this year we reduced by 90 per cent the monthly total of potential migrants entering the city of Agadez, the main point of entry and exit for migrants in the Niger. In 2017, 268 traffickers were referred to the courts, and 140 of their vehicles were impounded. Those results, which have been unanimously acknowledged and commended by the international community, are the product of the commitment and political will of President Mahamadou Issoufou to combating irregular migration and trafficking in persons and helping to eradicate the inhuman and degrading treatment of migrants beyond Agadez.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the cooperation between the Niger and the United Nations through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, which contribute

significantly to managing migration flows in my country. The Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, to be held in Marrakech in December, will result in the adoption of the global compact and will certainly be a defining moment. The Niger, as a perfect example of a transit country, will attend the Conference in Marrakech in order to support the initiative as a starting point for structured international cooperation on migration.

The Sustainable Development Goals remain one of the major preoccupations of the international community in general, and of developing countries in particular. Three years after their adoption, my country has just presented its first voluntary national review of its implementation of the Goals at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held here in New York in July. The Forum, under the theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies", provided the Niger with an opportunity to share with other members of the international community our progress, especially in the areas of energy access, education and health services, as well as security. In pursuing development, my country has adopted a 2035 strategy for sustainable development and inclusive growth, incorporated into its 2017-2021 economic and social development plan, which constitutes the national framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The strategy is also linked to the African Union's Agenda 2063 for the development of the continent, one of the key implementation instruments of which is the African Free Continental Trade Area, adopted in Rwanda in March at the tenth extraordinary summit of the African Union, convened for that purpose.

The Free Trade Area is aimed specifically at overcoming dependence on commodity exports and at promoting social and economic transformation so as to achieve inclusive growth, industrialization and sustainable development throughout the continent. Considerable efforts to mobilize domestic resources are being pursued diligently in line with the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development. It is nonetheless clear that many challenges remain and must be overcome if we are to meet the goals of those various programmes. Hence the need for the effective implementation of a more proactive and equitable global partnership in accordance with the commitments made by developed countries with regard to official development assistance.

In addition, as a country of the Sahel with two thirds of its land area in the desert, the Niger is being hit hard by the effects of climate change, whose economic consequences are on the verge of making people's lives intolerable. The 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change represents a unique opportunity to save our planet. The Niger has taken pride in implementing the measures set out in the Agreement's road map. Accordingly, in November, at President Mahamadou Issoufou's initiative as Chair of the Sahel climate commission, my country will host a round table for technical and financial partners to identify guidelines for the implementation of the Sahel region climate investment plan. I therefore call on the international community, as well as our various partners, to participate in that endeavour. Financing the plan will enable the Sahel countries to manage the impact of climate change on populations and ecosystems more effectively.

The demographic challenge is another priority area for my country, which is dealing with a population growth rate of 4.2 per cent, the highest in the world, according to our 2012 general census of the population. Aware of the impasse that the country could face if nothing is done to reduce that rate, the Government has redoubled its efforts by engaging the people and their traditional and religious leaders and partners in a significant effort to reverse the trend. Since then we have noted a drop in the overall national average birth rate from 7.6 children per woman in 2012 to 6 per woman in 2017. If that trend continues, within several years we hope to achieve manageable population growth in relation to our gross national product. For that we need the robust support of the international community. At the same time, the Government will pursue efforts to enrol girls in school and ensure that they stay in school up to the compulsory age of 16, as the two problems are closely linked.

I mentioned earlier the major challenges facing the Sahel region in general and the Niger in particular. They involve terrorism, cross-border crime, extreme poverty and climate and environmental shocks, all of which have disrupted our agro-pastoral economy and increased the vulnerability of the peoples of the Sahel. In order to tackle our security challenges, the Heads of State and Government of the region have taken initiatives, including by pooling their resources

through the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad basin countries and of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), in order to mitigate the Malian crisis and its spillover into neighbouring countries.

With regard to the situation in the Lake Chad basin region, the 2014 deployment of the Multinational Joint Force made up of troops from Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and the Niger has enabled us to weaken the operational capacity of the terrorist group Boko Haram, thereby contributing to the gradual return of peace and stability to the subregion. The challenge facing the region today is therefore becoming markedly more socioeconomic rather than security-related. It is now a matter of gradually ensuring the welfare of a population reeling from the disasters created by the years of violent conflict that have resulted in hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. It is also a matter of rebuilding the region's economy, while prioritizing youth employment and rebuilding the Lake Chad region. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all partners currently involved in dealing with the humanitarian consequences of that conflict.

Within the framework of the G-5 Sahel, the Joint Force for that region was established in 2017 to combat terrorism and cross-border crime within the five member countries more effectively, as well as to secure the region and thereby create the conditions necessary for implementing development programmes. The process of making the Joint Force operational has not been as rapid as the countries concerned would have liked. However, with the impetus provided by the African Heads of State and Government at the thirty-first African Union Summit in Nouakchott in July, the process seems to be gaining momentum. The four operations undertaken with the support of Operation Barkhane, led by France, have been successful. The Joint Force's primary concern involves obtaining, in a sustainable way, the resources needed to carry out its work. The international high-level conference on the Sahel held in Brussels in February made it possible to secure the financing required for the first year. We welcome that accomplishment, thank those partners that pledged to support our efforts financially, and urgently appeal for the completion of the process needed to make the pledged funds available. Beyond the first year's scope of work, however, the outlook is not reassuring with regard to ensuring that the Joint Force has the necessary funding to complete its mission. In order to ensure sustained funding and resources for it, we continue to believe that the best-advised solution would be to give it a mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. It is a matter of peace and security in the region, and even the world. We find it difficult to understand the hesitation shown by certain countries when faced with the obvious.

The challenges facing us are not only security-related. They are above all economic. The Sahel needs meaningful investments for its development. We welcome the ubiquitous initiatives to that end, including those of the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and other bilateral partners, but we must act fast in coordinating their implementation. The upcoming meeting in Nouakchott on 6 December dedicated to the G-5 Sahel priority investment programme will be a major test for efforts to deal resolutely with the issue of development, which, in my opinion, is the best defence against terrorism.

Concerning other conflicts in Africa, my country welcomes the de-escalation in the Horn of Africa over the past three months and the peace agreement signed by the warring parties in South Sudan. Those are two pieces of good news, and we can only be grateful for the wisdom that led to them. With regard to the Middle East, our meeting here is taking place in an environment in which international solidarity with the Palestinian cause is undergoing a noticeable decline in terms of political and financial support, resulting in budget cuts and the recognition of Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of Israel by certain members of the international community. The Niger reaffirms its support for the aspirations of the Palestinian people to realize their right to establish their own independent and sovereign State within the June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. With regard to Yemen, we express our commitment to that country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Niger rejects all forms of interference in its internal affairs and supports it in its search for a peaceful solution to the current bloody conflict and efforts to achieve comprehensive and harmonious development.

Since the 2005 World Summit, we at the United Nations have been working on comprehensive reform of the United Nations system, aimed at enabling the Organization to play its unifying and leading role in realizing solidarity and friendship among peoples. In our view, the new global partnership for development must mean a decrease in intra- and inter-State

inequalities and the collaboration of every State — large or small, rich or poor — in the decision-making process in overseeing world affairs. That is how we will ensure balanced governance at the United Nations. With regard to reform of the Security Council, the Niger remains committed to the African Common Position eshrined in the Ezulwini Consensus. We strongly encourage Member States to step up that process and demonstrate greater resolve in their efforts to adapt the Security Council to the realities of today's world.

In conclusion, on behalf of peacekeeping operations, I stress the fact that new forms of conflict, particularly asymmetrical wars, impose demands on us to which we would like to see a response in the form of a radical transformation of the current United Nations peacekeeping system. That will require strengthening cooperation among the United Nations, regional organizations and the troop-contributing countries and providing missions v ith conflict-specific mandates.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Francine Baron, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Caribbean Community Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Ms. Baron (Dominica): I congratulate the President of the General Assembly on her election to the presidency, and my delegation wishes her every success in a productive tenure as we seek to direct the affairs of this important institution in the interests of humankind.

I would like to express my condolences to the people of Indonesia, who are struggling to cope with the effects of the tsunami that struck them yesterday. We know all too well how challenging this time must be for them, and we off them our solidarity.

There are few moments in the history of a nation that capture the resilience, fortitude and strength of its people. For us that moment came on 18 September 2017, when Hurricane Maria unleashed its fury of 180-mile-per-hour winds on us, bringing Dominica to its knees. Immediately after the raging winds and torrential downpours subsided, our people raised their battered and wounded selves and began the daunting task of search-and-rescue and clearing roadways, and thereafter quickly moved into rebuilding mode.

I am proud to stand here, one year later, representing a people who have fought against adversity since that day to attain some form of normalcy in their lives. I am proud to be representing students who spent months away from classrooms and endured the inconvenience of no electricity, no Internet and the disruption of living in shelters, but who attained some of the highest scores on the recently concluded Caribbean secondary-school examinations. I am proud to stand here representing the farmers who have gone back to their fields and are now harvesting fresh produce to feed our people and to export. I applaud Dominicans far and wide for being part of the relief efforts and the rebuilding process, but I salute in particular those at home who have walked for miles every day up, down and across the island to be of service, and worked countless hours to save lives, provide essential services and deliver vital supplies to those in need. Hurricane Maria wreaked havoc on Dominica, but the world must be told of the strength of Dominicans, our tenacity and our determination as a people.

The efforts of our people were keenly matched by the outpouring of support that we received from members of the United Nations family — from our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean region to our international partners and friends, ordinary men and women across the globe reached out to us to lend a helping hand. As we speak, scores of volunteers are on the ground helping with the rebuilding efforts. We have also received tremendous support from regional response agencies and international organizations, both within and outside the United Nations system, and from institutions such as the World Bank. All of their efforts have contributed significantly to the progress that we have made thus far. We cannot on this occasion single out those many persons, countries and organizations that have reached out to us, but the people of Dominica are eternally grateful to all of them for standing with us in our darkest hour. I thank them all.

A few days after the passage of Hurricane Maria, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit of Dominica stood before this body and sounded a call for action (see A/72/PV.19). He called for the world to wake up and take note that the war of climate change had come to our shores. He sent out a call to all countries — big and small, developed and developing — to come together to save our planet. One year later, what have we done? Where are we? What have we achieved? Among and around us are many who continue to deny the reality of climate change. We have not, as a global community, agreed on a plan for the implementation of the commitments made at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change in Paris. Nor have we mobilized the resources to capitalize the $100 billion dollars per year pledged to assist the most vulnerable and to adapt to and mitigate the harmful effects of climate change. While we have been failing to live up to those commitments, Arctic ice shelves have continued to melt at an alarming rate, the oceans continue to get warmer, hurricanes and storms continue to develop and threaten our countries, and droughts are becoming more severe and flooding more pronounced. Climate change is therefore the global responsibility of our time. I do not even for a brief moment say that lightly. How could I say anything lightly, standing here in this forum that appeals to our universal humanity?

We live in a world in which too many children go hungry night after night; light arms and small weapons continue to infiltrate our most vulnerable societies; and non-communicable diseases account for many preventable deaths. Yes, I agree that poverty, inequality and violence are shared responsibilities too, but their modern-day manifestations are wrapped up in climate change. Climate change arises from activities that support and reflect inequalities, and it is always the poor who suffer the most. It is the poor whose lands are impacted by severe droughts and flooding and whose homes are destroyed and whose loved ones perish. It is the poor who have the least capacity to escape the heavy burdens of poverty, disease and death.

Much violence flows directly from the climate change-induced scarcity of things like water and productive lands. Climate change is the main symptom of our world's broken economy, society and humanity. Those are precisely the issues for which the United Nations was created. Let this not be just another moment to simply sharpen the rhetoric or to speak merely of redoubling current efforts. We have done that too many times before, and have nevertheless watched climate change continue its ravages. While we pontificate and engage in a perpetual debate, climate change will march on, laying waste to our forests and fields, whipping up the fury of angry winds and punishing rains and wrecking lives and livelihoods. It is no secret that some countries' lack of motivation to take the necessary action is rooted in the economic truth that those who gain most from the activities that create climate change remain the most removed from its dire consequences. Since climate change is the result of an economic calculus that will keep pushing global destruction further and further along, it must be accepted as the responsibility of our time, one we must put our collective efforts behind to arrest.

It was only after Prime Minister Skeritt left this Hall last year that international experts completed the post-disaster needs assessment for Dominica. Their conclusions disclosed that a single hurricane had in a few hours caused loss and damage equivalent to 226 per cent of our country's gross domestic product (GDP). A mere two years earlier, a tropical storm had wiped out the equivalent of 90 per cent of our GDP. The cost of rebuilding a better and more resilient nation comes with a price tag far in excess of what small developing States like Dominica are able to meet single-handedly. That is exacerbated by the debilitating impact that those events have on economic activities. It deprives the country of much-needed revenue at a critical time. As I speak before the Assembly at this very moment, dangerous storms are gathering in the Western Atlantic. As climate change warms the oceans and feeds the rainstorms, the risk of future loss and damage increases. Yet the price of the production and consumption of goods that contribute to climate change has not been set to compensate us for our losses and damages resulting from that change.

From the perspective of our shared destiny, those goods are being over-produced and over-consumed. Climate change is not a freak of nature. It is as man-made as power and greed. The "polluter pays" principle is an accepted principle — a golden nexus of morality, economics and environmental policy. The "polluter pays" principle is being tried and tested at the national level, but at the international level, alas, it is the victim who pays. Let us consider the insurance model championed by many industrialized countries and international agencies as the solution to climate change. Island States on the front line are being asked to take out additional insurance against the losses and damage that are the direct results of a change in climate caused by others. That is asking the victim to pay by instalment. The insane equivalent would be for the arsonist to tell a house-owner to take out fire insurance instead of trying to stop him setting fire to the house. If our principal response to man-made climate change is to make it easier for the victims to foot the bill, then the march of climate change will press on unimpeded. It is therefore untenable, indefensible and downright unacceptable.

The game-changer would be to establish a different kind of insurance that pays out quickly to the victims of climate disasters, especially for vulnerable and at-

risk countries like ours. Fairness requires that that insurance mechanism must be funded by those that have contributed most to climate change. Additionally, it needs to be scaled up as a matter of urgency. The Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility paid out funds for the immediate relief efforts, but it does not have the capacity to insure against loss and damage. Today I want to propose that the United Nations oversee a climate loss-and-damage insurance fund, whereby premiums are paid by those who have contributed most and continue to contribute to climate change, and whereby payouts go quickly to those who suffer the direct consequences of climate disasters, once they have been independently declared as such.

Ending the inequality that separates those who gain and those who lose would remove the fuel lines of climate change. That is what the international community must do, if it is serious about halting climate change. We urge the Assembly to do that, and we hope its feet are swift because we can no longer afford to wait. Our people needed sanctuary and safety yesterday, not tomorrow. In the past 12 months, while contending with the sheer hard task of relief and early recovery efforts, housing the vulnerable and restoring essential services, Dominica has instituted a plan to make it the first climate-resilient nation in the world. We have drafted legislation to establish the Climate Resilience Execution Agency of Dominica, which will deliver the projects that will achieve that goal. We have recruited its leadership and identified $1 billion worth of critical projects to complement the plan. We have rolled up our sleeves and started work. Our plan is based on designing extremely resilient networks, waterproofing our economy and building resilient communities. As we have critically examined the core of what it takes to be resilient, we have found that what looked insurmountable from a distance is not so daunting up close.

That realization has buoyed our confidence and re-energized every Dominican. By the grace of God, therefore, and with the continued support of our partners in the global community, we will become the first climate-resilient nation in the world. We encourage other vulnerable small island States to embark on building resilience to climate change as well. The costs, however, are above and beyond the capacity of small States. Support is critical from international organizations and their member States with the requisite technical expertise and financial resources.

The role of the United Nations is therefore central in coordinating and mobilizing resources. The creation of a special international climate-change resilience facility to provide technical and financial resources should be given the most urgent attention possible. The existing global, economic and development architecture must facilitate that new development paradigm. Official development assistance must be re-engineered to take into account the vulnerability of small island States and the imperative of building resilience to climate change. The international financial institutions must rethink the classification of debt. They must also rethink the essential services and vital infrastructure.

As we battle the effects of climate change, we are supremely conscious that there are many other challenges confronting our region and the wider world. Two emerging global problems brought on by climate change are those of climate-induced migration and disaster refugees. Although those problems are not yet full-blown, some countries that act as safe havens have begun to feel the pressures. That further underscores the fact that the emerging problems brought on by the effects of climate change require urgent global attention. Dominica calls on the United Nations to begin the discourse on both climate migration and disaster refugees while it is still early.

We champion our region as a zone of peace. We remain extremely concerned about the situation in our sister countries of Venezuela and Nicaragua. We call for support for a process of dialogue in order to achieve a peaceful resolution that can benefit of the citizens of those nations, while respecting and observing the time-honoured international norms of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

Over many years, this body has debated resolutions on ending the economic and financial blockade of our sister country Cuba. We have long established the fact that maintaining that trade embargo can have only a negative impact on our brothers and sisters in Cuba. Notwithstanding the constraints it faces, the Republic of Cuba has come to the aid of so many around the world, particularly in the areas of health care and education, and sometimes in the most trying of circumstances. We once again add our voice to the chorus of voices calling for an end to that blockade.

Dominica supports a United Nations where young people, who account for more than 40 per

cent of the world's population, can pursue a global youth agenda with opportunities for dialogue on key issues that affect their development. Similarly, we congratulate the stakeholder groups of persons with disabilities and other non-State actors for their efforts to advance opportunities for persons with disabilities in order to ensure that they remain part of the United Nations agenda.

If we keep looking down at our feet, we will die of sorrow. We choose to look up. We move forward, knowing that we are not alone on this challenging journey. Only 12 months ago, the international community heard our cry and stood with us. That has made us stronger and more motivated. To those who came to our aid, we thank them and urge them to stay the course over the next few years. Let us set the example of a better future for all humankind. Let history record what we did, not what we said, and the efforts we made to end the march of climate change globally and reduce our vulnerabilities locally. We must grasp this moment together.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean-Claude Gakosso, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Congolese Living Abroad of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gakosso (Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is my happy duty to address the General Assembly in this mythic and historic place, dedicated to peace around the world, on behalf of Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, and his Government. We can never say it enough — there is no alternative to peace. It is our firm belief that peace is one of the most precious assets bestowed on us by God and our human intelligence. It is an invaluable treasure shared by all nations of the world, all peoples of the Earth and the entire community of States. We must never forget that it is peace that is the raison d'être of this wonderful institution that is the United Nations. It is peace that is the essential motive for our regular and diligent meetings here.

Yet what do we see today when we take a panoramic look at our world and the new ideologies emerging in it? We see persistent and worsening tensions between States; a resurgence of nationalisms that we believed outdated; a normalization of sectarian discourse based on a fetishistic glorification of identity; the xenophobic contamination of certain social strata, ethnic and even racial intolerance and rejection of others, sometimes affecting entire populations; a questioning of the tremendous diversity of cultural expression that is canonized here at the United Nations and that constitutes the wealth of our world; the calling into question of multilateralism, despite the fact that it continues to provide a source of balance in international relations; and multiplying signs of rupture, particularly through the undermining of the founding and inalienable premise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the seventieth anniversary of which we celebrate this year.

At the same time, we see conflicts proliferating in various parts of the world, while senseless terrorism and violent extremism, often fuelled by religious proselytizing, have almost taken hostage vast territories that are then transformed into lawless areas, encouraged by the irrepressible vanity of individuals' selfish geostrategic calculations. As we can see, our world has entered a new period of uncertainty, perhaps even depravity. In some ways it brings back memories of the gloomy decade of the 1930s in the previous century. The proof is that the terrifying notion of wars between States based on identity has violently resurfaced in our vocabulary, even if it is masked for the time being by the euphemism of a trade war. That is all happening before our eyes, despite the fact that we all belong, without exception, to this divine and unique human race, despite the fact that we are all inhabitants with equal rights and an equal part to play on this shared and therefore crucial abode that is our planet.

What can we say about the migration crisis and the horrifying toll of thousands of lives, often young lives, that have been claimed by the deep abyss of the Mediterranean Sea? How can we, the United Nations, gathered here in this peaceful and fraternal forum, peoples united in a community of destiny, stand idly by as our youth bleeds away on a scale unprecedented in history? How can we stand idle in the face of the tragic fate of a continent whose youth is being drained away before our eyes, depriving it of the vital forces of its valiant young people and the willing hands that are needed to build the future of its countries? How can we remain indifferent to such an enormous catastrophe, whose long-term consequences will one day catch up with us? How can we remain indifferent to so much suffering and grief? It is clear that we must act, and we must act together, resolutely and quickly, working to develop a United Nations that is relevant to all

peoples, as the theme of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly states.

Individually and collectively, we must all work to build and preserve peace in the world, because conflicts everywhere, regardless of their nature, have the same consequences of destruction, frustration, injury and bruising. Conflicts are the result of public misery, and we must therefore work to resolve them. That is a moral requirement. It is precisely that moral requirement that has for years inspired President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak today, in his tireless efforts for peace.

In seeking solutions to the serious crises that roil the heart of Africa, my country — which since last year has held the dual presidency of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region — has therefore in a way become the seat of the African debate, the place where summits of Heads of State and ministerial conferences, negotiations and consultations take place with a view to ensuring peace in the region and beyond. We issue strong recommendations to stakeholders and Governments to shoulder more responsibility so that the region can be permanently rid of armed violence and can focus on its own development.

With regard to the Central African region, the Republic of Congo would like to commend the latest political developments in our neighbour the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which will choose new leaders at the end of this year. We once again applaud the effective implementation of the electoral process in that country and call on all stakeholders in the process to prioritize dialogue, strengthen interaction and work to develop an appropriate balance so that all the elections can take place in peace. We are also deeply concerned about the upsurge in armed violence in the Central African Republic. We appeal to the rebel groups that remain reluctant to join the peace process being courageously led by President Touadera to engage resolutely and in good faith, while relying on the support of the panel of facilitators for the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation and other facilitating entities.

With regard to the crisis in Libya, in connection with which my country has received mandates from the African Union Ad Hoc High-level Committee on Libya to seek solutions, the Republic of the Congo encourages initiatives that can contribute to the speedy restoration of peace in Libya and throughout the continent. We support the idea of holding elections in Libya as soon as possible — general, inclusive, free, transparent and credible elections — while we also consider it essential to create a context conducive to peacebuilding, including by organizing meetings for reconciliation and the disarmament of militias, so that the elections do not add further violence to violence.

In the Republic of the Congo itself, the Pool department, in the country's southern region, which until recently was gripped by a residual rebellion, has finally found the joy of peace. Thanks to the combined efforts of the State authorities at the highest level and international partners, a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreement was reached on 23 December 2017 and has gradually come into force. This is also the appropriate forum in which to commend the support of the United Nations, particularly because the Organization was able to quickly establish funding for our programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

For the Republic of the Congo, the pursuit of the ideals of peace and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for the benefit of humankind are essential commitments, including to improving the integration of women and young people into decision-making processes and implementing actions aimed primarily at eradicating poverty in all its forms. It is obvious that we cannot hope to build prosperous and peaceful societies if women, who make up half of humankind, and young people, who are the builders of tomorrow's world, do not fully enjoy their legitimate rights. That is why today my Government is prioritizing those two sectors of the population, given that their dynamism constitutes one of the main drivers of our country's economic growth.

A few days ago, from this very rostrum, the Secretary-General of our Organization, Mr. António Guterres, called on the leaders of the world to delay no longer in protecting our planet from the disastrous consequences of climate change. That call has particular resonance in my country, which, as the Assembly is aware, is located in the heart of the Congo basin forest. Our Government has been working for years to preserve the invaluable heritage of Central Africa's huge equatorial forests and the extraordinary biodiversity they contain.

Mr. Gata Mavita Wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair. From this rostrum, I would also like to invite sponsors, donors, philanthropists, nature lovers, those brothers and sisters who have been favoured by fortune, all people of goodwill and all nations to join the peoples of the world and the Governments of the Central African countries in protecting the forests of the Congo basin in order to ensure clean and healthy air for our children, our descendants, all humankind and its offspring.

From this rostrum and on behalf of my President, I solemnly call on the conscience of the world and all in this Assembly to join in a sacred union, under the leadership of the United Nations, to give strength and vigour to the valuable instruments that we put in place following the Paris Agreement on Climate Change — the Congo Basin Climate Commission and the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin, which are designed to improve the preservation of the Congo basin forest, the world's second-largest lung, whose immense territory and exuberance are matched only by those of the Amazon. Those instruments are awaiting our generous contributions, which will serve the cause of humankind by protecting life on this beautiful and irreplaceable blue planet.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. C. Peter David, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Grenada.

Mr. David (Grenada): I am pleased to extend the usual warm greetings from the Government and the people of Grenada, on whose behalf I am privileged to address this noble Organization and its Members.

I join previous speakers in congratulating the President on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I am confident of her stewardship and assure her of my delegation's cooperation and support. I am also pleased to join my colleagues in thanking the outgoing President of the Assembly at its seventy-second session, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his able and focused leadership. I must also congratulate and thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his leadership of the United Nations, and express our deep gratitude, especially for the keen interest he has shown in dealing with the development challenges facing small island developing States.

The Government and people of Grenada join others around the world in mourning the passing of the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Mr. Annan, who served the United Nations with distinction, was a consummate diplomat and international statesman who resolutely defended the ideals of international peace and security. The former Secretary-General was a humanitarian who worked tirelessly to ensure that disadvantaged persons around the world were afforded their human rights. His wise and courageous leadership helped place the issue of sustainable development on the international agenda through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs have since evolved into the Sustainable Development Goals, another globally agreed framework designed to advance the international development agenda.

We are acutely aware of how critical development issues are for small island developing States like Grenada, and we are indebted to Kofi Annan for initiating and spearheading that historic global movement. Today, as we mourn his loss, we are comforted by the fact that his legacy will continue to inspire generations of leaders around the world. There is one particular quote from our brother Kofi that resonates deeply and is very relevant to the theme of this year's session. He said,

> "To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there."

As States Members of this noble Organization, we must deliberately choose to make the United Nations relevant to all peoples. We must also choose a deliberate path to global leadership that promotes shared responsibility for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. Grenada also joins the rest of the United Nations community in honouring the late South African hero and international statesman, Nelson Mandela, on the centenary of his birth. This tribute comes at a time when the international community is looking to leaders who understand the necessity of fostering international solidarity and cooperation, leaders who bring people together and make sacrifices for the greater good. The global community has no better example of that than the late great Madiba. It is our hope that leaders everywhere will work diligently to uphold his staunch legacy of promoting peace, equality and human dignity.

This session of the Assembly is taking place in a global context characterized by changing political, ideological and religious tensions, social revolution and an increasing anxiety about economic,

social and political inequality and marginalization. Those global changes are magnified, especially for developing States, in the face of challenging phenomena such as climate change, natural disasters and non-communicable diseases. With limited access to development financing, those challenges are further exacerbated. Pursuing policies and strategies for confronting those challenges, with the corresponding extraordinary solutions, is the path we must follow in order to secure more sustainable societies.

We are well into the 2018 hurricane season and yet the Caribbean is still recovering from that of 2017, one of the most devastating hurricane seasons the world has seen. We have been holding our breath as this year's various tropical systems — Beryl, Isaac and just this week, Kirk — take aim at our region. Such weather systems are yet another reminder of the vulnerability of our region and the realities of climate change, capable of eviscerating entire industries in a matter of hours. That is especially evident in our region, which is heavily dependent on agriculture and tourism, and where any damage to property or infrastructure is significant.

Yet there is hope. Too often we talk about the disadvantages of small nations. The global climate-change challenge offers us an opportunity not only to highlight our vulnerability but also to focus on the distinct advantages of being small States. The Caribbean and other small island developing States can serve as proving grounds for the nationwide implementation of climate-related technologies and advances. We also represent some of the most globally compelling business cases for sustainable and renewable energy investment.

Being climate-smart goes beyond policies. It goes beyond resilient housing, infrastructure and agriculture. It means that the region can also serve as a global beacon for renewable energy and energy efficiency. We aim to be resilient, and with our region's tremendous potential in hydroelectricity and geothermal energy, we could also be climate-smart. In understanding the need to rethink our adaptation to climate change, the Government of Grenada has established a new, overarching Ministry of Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries, Disaster Management and Information. Its mandate is to work speedily to ensure that engrained in every aspect of our country's development is the question of addressing climate change and climate resilience.

Grenada is also currently shifting some of its macroeconomic focus so as to ensure that attention is paid to the development of our green and blue economies, thereby tying economic development and environmental sustainability together. The road to climate-smart sustainability is long and arduous, but it is not insurmountable, and we must ensure that we are strategic on that journey. In building climate-smart and sustainable societies, we cannot overlook the inherent need to improve the health of our citizens and the conditions needed to foster good health.

Unfortunately, like many Caribbean Community States and other developing nations, Grenada struggles with the scourge of non-communicable diseases. In order to avoid repeating some of the alarming health statistics that confront and challenge us developmentally, I wish only to emphasize that our Government calls for global leadership and looks forward to international solutions that can preserve the health of our people, promote longevity and sustain our future. Indeed, the successful completion of this week's high-level meetings on non-communicable diseases and tuberculosis is encouraging, particularly in the commitments set forth in the political declarations laudably adopted by consensus. Now is the time to scale up our efforts to ensure that we honour those commitments.

As we attempt to create sustainable societies, we are confronted with certain global financial policies and actions that pose significant threats to our region's sustainable development. Measures such as the withdrawal of correspondent banking services, along with de-risking, blacklisting and graduation to middle-income status, negatively affect Caribbean economies. The unilateral and premature graduation of many small island developing States to middle-income status, without consideration of our region's specific vulnerabilities, has resulted in significant budgetary shortfalls that adversely affect our economic and social development. Our region has inherent structural economic challenges that already restrict the pace of our development. We ask that those impediments to growth be taken into account when our cases come up for consideration.

The Caribbean Development Bank has pioneered the use of vulnerability indices when setting the terms for its financing. We also urge international partners to work towards an acceptable vulnerability index that holistically assesses our countries' development risks. On top of that, the withdrawal of correspondent

banking services from Caribbean Community member States can be seen as an economic assault that will destabilize the financial sector of our already vulnerable economies. Remittances contribute in real and significant terms to the gross domestic product of small States. In fact, the World Bank has said that any sudden halt to remittances in economies that rely on those flows could pose a significant threat to their socioeconomic stability.

In addition to the threat of lost correspondent banking relationships, we must also contend with the unilateral and often unfounded blacklisting of our institutions as money-launderers and our countries as tax havens. It pains us as policymakers when we expend our limited resources to comply with international rules, only to face arbitrary punishments when we are quite evidently doing our best. There are no easy answers to those challenges, but I urge our partners to desist from draconian approaches to those matters when dealing with vulnerable developing nations.

Grenada continues to work with our international partners to advance international peace and security. Grenada's position on the development of nuclear weapons is clear. It is inherently destructive and therefore serves no good purpose for humankind. Deterrence makes sense only where there is the possibility of deployment. The mere existence of those weapons anywhere is unacceptable. Grenada therefore urges its friends to desist from the development and testing of such weapons. Imagine what we could achieve instead if we put our brilliant scientists to work on climate change and building climate-smart resilient and sustainable societies.

As we strive to maintain the Caribbean region as a zone of peace, some of us continue to be affected by the traffic in small arms from countries that manufacture and sell them freely. In some of our islands, states of emergency have been declared at various times to control criminal activity resulting from the increasing availability and use of small arms. Small arms and gun violence undermine the rule of law and are often major factors behind the displacement of civilians and the violation of human rights. We cannot build sustainable societies if our public security is incessantly threatened by that scourge.

The main purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security and prevent violence and war. The Charter of the United Nations actually makes only five references to war, while there are 47 references to peace. That is extremely instructive and it is therefore imperative to ensure that the global leadership takes decisive action. Indeed, as we strive to create sustainable societies, the people of Cuba continue to suffer under the decades-old unjust embargo imposed on them by the United States of America. Grenada continues to call for the immediate lifting of the unfair economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba, and strongly supports resolution 70/5, which calls for an end to the dreadful embargo.

Some of our neighbours in Latin America are currently experiencing political and economic challenges that threaten the peaceful existence, sustainable development and by extension the stability of the region. Grenada calls for dialogue and asks that good sense and wisdom prevail in all attempts aimed at resolving those conflicts. We also call for respect for the political integrity and sovereignty of those States. The Government of Grenada continues to offer its hand in good faith to facilitate dialogue aimed at settling those disputes.

In conclusion, I implore Members to work relentlessly in our pursuit of the purposes of the Organization. Our quest must be for the pursuit of economic opportunities as we strive to achieve peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies for all. Those ideals will be beyond our reach if we do not promote, encourage and insist on resolute global leadership in solving our development challenges, which transcend boundaries.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Awad Isse, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Mr. Isse (Somalia): I would like to begin by congratulating the President and her country of Ecuador on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly this year. Let me also thank the President's predecessor for steering the General Assembly at its seventy-second session with admirable skill. On behalf of my Government and the people of Somalia, our sympathies and condolences go to the Government and the people of Indonesia, who have suffered as a result of the recent deadly tsunami that has claimed hundreds of human lives.

It is a profound honour for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia. Our Administration has now completed one and a half years in office, and I am

glad to say that we have made huge strides in security-sector reform and in our political and economic transformation. We are, however, mindful of the enormous challenges that we face in fixing Somalia, and especially in overcoming the threats of terrorism.

I am equally mindful of the huge expectations that our people have for our President's leadership and his ability to provide lasting solutions to our security challenges. It is for that reason that our President, His Excellency Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, recently spent six weeks at our defence headquarters and time at various defence positions, giving directions and providing on-the-ground approvals at forward operating bases.

We have initiated a new round of operations that have successfully opened up road networks and supply routes and thereby have liberated towns and villages from occupation by Al-Shabaab terrorists. We recognize that providing lasting solutions to the challenge of security is an immense undertaking that needs a multifaceted approach. While we and our partners are taking out and dismantling all the terrorists' hideouts by military means, we are also engaging our religious leaders, elders, young people, women and civil-society groups so that we can turn the tide against the twisted ideology of hate and religious intolerance.

The silver lining is that young men and women are not voluntarily joining Al-Shabaab. That ideology is no longer popular, and Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaida no longer have a ready stream of new and volunteer recruits in Somalia. It is also important to note that some within their ranks, mostly young men and women, have heeded our amnesty offer, renounced violence and peacefully surrendered. Senior commanders, former sector heads and infantrymen have unconditionally surrendered as well, bringing with them their arsenals and their non-standard tactical vehicles, known in military terms as "technicals". The combination of those factors has further weakened the terror network's logistical and planning capabilities.

Al-Shabaab now largely exists as an amorphous network operating as an irregular outfit that plans terror attacks from the shadows, but not as a strong insurgent force that can sustain resistance. We are now engaged in creating civil networks aimed at encouraging a healthy partnership between law enforcement and communities that can flush out terrorist remnants. Our people acknowledge that sustaining security is a collective responsibility, and in turn that awareness has helped us establish effective policing models that involve the public.

Our quest for a peaceful and stable Somalia will not end when Al-Shabaab is defeated, but that is the first step. Our comprehensive security-sector reform is our basis for developing capacity, streamlining, strategizing and implementing a practical transition that envisions an effective security force and stable security institutions.

We recognize that promoting justice, respecting the rule of law and protecting peoples' rights are key components in peace-building. That quest includes an organized, gradual and systematic transfer of security tasks to appropriate forces, as agreed in our national security architecture, while at the same time establishing political and economic measures to support and sustain the transition at the federal, state and community levels.

On behalf of the people of Somalia, I want to say unequivocally that we are truly grateful to the brave men and women who have served and continue to serve in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). They have made huge sacrifices to keep our people safe, and that will never be forgotten. We remain in their debt.

In order to consolidate our collective security gains and further support our Somali security institutions so that we can take over from AMISOM, I call on the United Nations to lift the long-standing arms embargo on Somalia, which is now preventing us from levelling the field in our battle with terrorist groups. When our fighting arsenal is only equal to the enemy's, the odds are split. A stronger fighting capacity would give us the upper hand and enable us to entirely dismantle the terrorists, and possibly in a shorter time.

Our Administration's foremost objective is expanding the democratic space available to our people. It should be considered sacrosanct that every Somali should enjoy the inalienable rights to life, freedom and protection enshrined in our provisional Constitution, including freedom of the press, freedom of association and even the freedom to petition the Government for the redress of grievances. That is why we are winning the fight against terrorists. Our people have been suppressed and subjugated for a long time by terrorist networks, and those freedoms and protections mean a lot to them. Individually and collectively, our people

and communities recognize that it is the responsibility of their Government to protect their liberties. Our people also appreciate the fact that for the Government to do so, we must all operate within the terms of our Constitution.

One of our core values is protecting, supporting and providing a platform for minority groups and communities and those with special needs. Our people acknowledge that for our system of governance to be effective, the rule of law must reign supreme. Only then can we attain the vision of a prosperous Somalia. As we mark 18 years since the rebirth of our Republic in Arta, Djibouti, our quest for an inclusive, reformed political system is now on the right track. We have an agreed election model, adopted jointly by the central Government and the federal member states in Baidoa in June and endorsed by the international community in Brussels during the Somalia Partnership Forum in July. We note that it is the election period for some of the federal member states. Our role, as the central Government, will be to promote transparent, free and fair processes.

We have set specific goals with regard to economic development and have established frameworks for key deliverables in attaining our goals for sustainable productivity in the areas of agriculture, fisheries and livestock. Somalia enjoys the double blessing of a strategic location in the Horn of Africa and a vast wealth of natural resources. Significant oil reserves, natural gas, iron ore and arable and productive land, as well as Africa's second-longest coastline after the island of Madagascar, provide enormous opportunities for sustainable output.

My Government's objective is to tap into those opportunities, transform our economy, streamline our trade and investment policies, and open up new trade routes and horizons for our people. In that regard, we are seeking to strengthen alliances with our core partners so as to promote trade and investment opportunities, even as we widen our scope in our quest for broader, far-reaching economic cooperation. We seek to strengthen strategic partnerships with our neighbours, the continent and the world, where we share mutual interests in economic development, security and social cooperation.

One of our Government's key priorities is promoting sustainable fiscal policies aimed at growing our economy and instilling the discipline required to maintain it. Somalia is committed to working purposefully for financial self-sufficiency and the achievement of the crucial Sustainable Development Goals. Through the International Monetary Fund's staff-monitored programme, we have raised domestic revenue to unprecedented levels, and we are in the process of normalizing relations with international financial institutions through continuing dialogue and meaningful engagement. Those efforts are edging us closer to debt relief.

Somalia is committed to boosting economic integration and free trade flows across the region. The Horn of Africa is undergoing a remarkable political and economic transformation. Somalia is proud to be playing a leading role in the quest for the region's economic integration and to be serving as a mediator in the effort to end the decades-long conflicts that have dogged the region. We are pleased to be contributing towards realizing the African Union's goal of silencing the guns by 2020.

A new dawn of leadership is at hand in the Horn of Africa. A stronger desire to bolster historical ties for shared interests represents a means for effective cooperation among the countries of the region. In order to achieve our common goal of economic progress and prosperity for the Horn of Africa, I humbly call on the United Nations to lift all economic sanctions on our neighbour, Eritrea. Such a move would improve the flow of imports and exports and the movement of people and businesses, and it would fulfil our vision for the successful economic integration of the region.

There is evidence everywhere that Africa is moving towards greater connectivity and prosperity. East Africa is becoming the continent's fastest-growing region as Africa becomes the world's largest free trade area. It is time for us to focus on and encourage intra-African investment. Somalia, with its resource potential, is committed to moving with the continent. We have recently joined the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa trade bloc, and we have also applied for membership in a number of other trade and economic blocs.

It is only by expanding the prospects for open markets, free trade, investments and policies that ease the movement of people and businesses between the countries of Africa that we can bring about solutions to the domestic, economic and social challenges that we face, as we work towards realizing the African

Union's Agenda 2063. We need to formulate joint policies that provide lasting solutions to the problem of illegal immigration and that expand our scope and vision for economic and social progress, which in turn will help to create jobs and opportunities for our young people, provide meaningful employment and improve the quality of education. It can no longer be business as usual when, year in and year out, we are losing hundreds of productive young men and women to the Mediterranean, ostensibly in search of better living prospects. It is ironic that this is happening as the world is focusing on Africa for its resources, markets and labour.

I am hopeful that better days and better prospects lie ahead for all of us. For Somalia, it is the beginning of a transformation. We have risen anew and afresh. We are not only optimistic but also motivated, as our security is improving, our economy is on an upward trend and our foreign policy has already received accolades in the region and beyond. We are focused on keeping pace with the ever-changing economic and technological dynamics of today, and we are embracing new ideas. As such, we are open to all investments, and we are ready to do business.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alpha Barry, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Barry (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): In the 73 years since our Organization was created, Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés is the fourth woman to be elected President of the General Assembly, and only the second in half a century. Her election deserves to be particularly welcomed and that is why, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Burkina Faso, whom I have the honour to represent here, as well as on behalf of my delegation, I offer her my warmest and most sincere congratulations. Burkina Faso, a Vice-President of the General Assembly at this session, will spare no effort to ensure the success of our work.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, whose actions since he took office have not gone unnoticed, I reaffirm Burkina Faso's full support for his commitment and determination to bring about important and ambitious reforms to make the United Nations more effective.

Before continuing, I want to spare a thought for the brotherly and friendly people of Indonesia, who have been severely tested today by an earthquake and a tsunami. On behalf of President Kaboré, I extend our sincere condolences and deepest sympathies to the Government and the people of Indonesia and to the families of the victims. We also wish the many injured a swift recovery.

Burkina Faso has been tirelessly pursuing its efforts to strengthen democracy and consolidate the rule of law through many measures, including finalizing the preliminary draft of our new Constitution and, on 30 July, revising the law on the electoral code. Referendum consultations are scheduled for 2019. Our future Constitution, drafted in a consultative framework, aims to strengthen human rights and civil liberties, taking into account other new provisions, such as access to land for all, the right to clean drinking water, the right to employment and the abolition of the death penalty. Further provisions are planned to introduce balance into the distribution of power. In addition, the process of revising the electoral code will pave the way for Burkina Faso citizens overseas to vote, allowing them to participate in the presidential elections in 2020 for the first time in our country's history.

Meanwhile, many other reforms have been launched to improve political and economic governance, modernize the Administration, consolidate public finances and strengthen the independence of the judiciary, as well as human rights. On the economic front, despite a difficult security and social context, Burkina Faso has attained a growth rate of 6.7 per cent thanks to the consolidation of public finances, the initiation of reforms to improve tax revenues and the structuring of projects launched within the framework of the national economic and social development plan. The fruits of that growth have been redistributed by building infrastructure and adopting social measures in favour of our most underprivileged citizens, particularly women and girls. Our free health-care policy has significantly improved care for pregnant women and children under the age of five and will continue with the operationalization of a universal health-insurance system that will gradually enable health-care coverage to be extended to all Burkina Faso citizens.

In terms of public health and access to drinking water, substantial efforts have been made to benefit rural and urban areas. Likewise, our special job-creation programme for young people and women aims to promote their access to jobs and acquisition of vocational skills, with a view to opening up

opportunities for their sustainable integration into the labour market. In addition, an integrated women's empowerment programme aims to strengthen their productive capacities and their participation in Burkina Faso's economic and social development by 2020.

Burkina Faso remains very concerned about the insecurity and terrorist attacks that it has been subjected to for the past three years. Once limited to our northern regions, the terrorist threat has gradually spread to other areas, especially the south-west and the east, which border on Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and the Niger, Benin and Togo respectively. In the space of three years, 229 civilians and military or paramilitary troops have been killed by armed terrorist groups.

In order to tackle that worrying situation, my Government is mobilizing all its human, financial, military, non-military and material resources to combat this terrible threat and ensure the people's security. Unfortunately, our unconscionable and faithless enemies will stop at nothing to sow their seeds of terror. Their new modus operandi is the use of improvised explosive devices. To provide some context, they have blown up two vehicles this week alone using such fatal devices, killing 14 members of our defence and security forces participating in security operations within our borders.

Besides attacking our defence and security forces, symbols of the State, the terrorists have been targeting civilians, students and teachers. More than 520 schools have closed, depriving nearly 56,000 students of their right to an education owing to the terrorist threat. By targeting schools, armed terrorist groups are attacking the education system generally, and thereby educated people — people who would try to thwart the dissemination of the terrorists' ideas and way of life. The terrorists know that an educated and enlightened person is more difficult to manipulate than one without education. Far from causing us to lose heart, those attacks have reinforced our unity, solidarity and determination to defend the values that underpin Burkina Faso — our republican form of Government, democracy, secularism and social cohesion.

In the fight against terrorism, one thing is unanimously acknowledged, which is that no one country can combat that threat alone. Even by coming together, as the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries have done in order to pool their efforts, the fact remains that our countries absolutely need the support of the international community to render the G-5 Sahel Joint Force operational. Beyond the countries directly affected by the terrible phenomenon of terrorism, the fight against terrorism is directly related to our broader need for international peace and security.

Indeed, in its resolution 72/165 of 19 December 2017, proclaiming 21 August the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, the General Assembly reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to strengthening international cooperation to prevent and fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In that regard, Burkina Faso appeals to the Security Council to place the G-5 Sahel Joint Force under a mandate deriving from Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, with a view to ensuring that it receives sustainable and multilateral financing.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recall that the Security Council, by its resolutions 2320 (2016) and 2378 (2017), has already expressed its intention to take concrete steps to establish the principles under which African Union peace operations authorized by the Security Council should be funded through United Nations assessed contributions, with decisions on funding specific missions to be taken on a case-by-case basis. At the seventy-second session, President Lajčák reminded us that

> "peace and prevention should be at the centre of everything the United Nations does, because when we read the Charter of the United Nations, there are only five references to war. The word 'peace', however, appears 47 times" (*A/72/PV.3, p.5*).

Therefore, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), both adopted on 27 April 2016, the high-level meeting on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (see A/72/PV.83 *et seq.*) held from 24 to 25 April placed particular emphasis on prevention. Indeed, prevention is at the heart of building and sustaining peace and must therefore be a primary objective for both States and the United Nations. It is also the primary responsibility of national Governments to determine the necessary priorities and strategies by involving every stratum of society. In order to consolidate peace, we must address the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, exclusion, discrimination — and, indeed, the effects of climate change.

It is for that reason that the Government of Burkina Faso launched an emergency programme for the Sahel

for the period from 2017 to 2020 as a holistic response to the region's dual socioeconomic and security challenges, through the realization of socioeconomic infrastructure projects and the establishment of basic social services, as well as the promotion of production and processing activities as sources of income for the people in the northern areas of our country. Initiatives for building and sustaining peace can succeed only if they receive sufficient, predictable, sustainable and coherent funding by involving multilateral and bilateral partners, as well as the private sector. Burkina Faso welcomes and applauds the support that it enjoys from the United Nations system and from the European Union in the implementation of that emergency programme.

The purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations are aimed at achieving a world of peace, justice, solidarity and social well-being for all, on a planet that is not threatened by climate change. The support that many countries like Burkina Faso receive from the United Nations system for their efforts to achieve development, and thereby the Sustainable Development Goals, is highly appreciated. That is why we welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 72/279, on repositioning the United Nations development system, which provides for a revitalization of the role of the resident coordinator system.

Burkina Faso welcomes the support given to the Sahel countries through the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel. The Plan, which covers the period from 2018 to 2030, will improve coordination and strengthen collaboration among the partners in the region. In addition, it will help to implement the priorities identified for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

It is now more necessary than ever that we defend and encourage multilateralism. That is the belief of Burkina Faso, and it must be a vision shared by all if we are to create a more open and more inclusive world. It is in the name of international solidarity that Burkina Faso is now engaged in six peacekeeping operations with more than 2,000 personnel, making our country a major actor in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We are also one of the few countries — one of only three, in fact — that maintain a military contingent in Guinea-Bissau responsible for the security of its republican institutions. Burkina Faso is the largest troop-contributing country to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the largest contributor of correctional officers to the United Nations. In that capacity, we will succeed Canada as Chair of the Group of Friends of Corrections in Peace Operations for a one-year term.

Because the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations also depend on its ability to prevent and manage crises and to promote international peace and security, Burkina Faso welcomes the reforms of management and of the peace and security pillar, which should improve the ability of the United Nations to effectively carry out its mission of sustainable peace and social progress for citizens around the world. Burkina Faso commends the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the holding of a high-level meeting on that initiative at this session. The adoption of the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations highlights the achievements of peacekeeping operations and enables us to reaffirm our shared commitment to addressing the most pressing challenges.

As peace, security, democracy, respect for human rights and development are intrinsically linked, we must work to ensure that all countries in crisis find peace. That is why Burkina Faso congratulates the Government and the people of Mali on their successful holding of presidential elections, despite the context there of terrorist threats, and calls on the Malian political class to stand together in making every possible effort to overcome that enemy. The peace agreement between the political leaders of South Sudan also merits high praise. On the subject of Western Sahara, Burkina Faso welcomes the announcement of the resumption of negotiations before the end of the year.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be of real concern, and Burkina Faso remains convinced that a solution must be political, peaceful, just and equitable, based on the existence of two States living side by side within secure and recognized borders. In Asia, the commencement of dialogue between the two Koreas is a good sign and should be encouraged and supported by the international community. Burkina Faso strongly endorses their dialogue. With regard to the economic, financial and commercial embargo against Cuba, Burkina Faso calls for it to be completely lifted.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a threat to peace and security in various parts of the world and is an obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. That is why my

country welcomes the inclusion of ammunition in the final document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3) of the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

With regard to weapons of mass destruction, we condemn the resurgence of the use of chemical weapons in recent years and call for general and complete disarmament where all weapons of mass destruction concerned.

Humanitarian issues are of paramount importance in view of the growing number of refugees and migrants around the world. Burkina Faso therefore welcomes the inclusive negotiation process that has resulted in the drafting of consensus-based texts for a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, scheduled to be adopted at the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for Migration, to be held on African soil in Marrakech on 10 and 11 December. As a migration country, with at least 4 million citizens living abroad and nearly 25,000 refugees on its territory, Burkina Faso intends to play an active role in the adoption of the two global compacts on migration and on refugees. They should help not only to establish effective migration management around the world but also to better protect refugees and migrants.

Burkina Faso also welcomes the organization on the margins of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly of high-level events on topics such as tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases. There is no doubt that the recommendations resulting from those two events will contribute to improving the management of those diseases, which have a negative impact on people's lives.

Intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform have been going on for more than 20 years, with 13 rounds of negotiations, but no comprehensive and satisfactory solution has emerged, even though the vast majority of Member States agree in principle on having a Security Council that is more representative, better adapted to contemporary realities and better able to quickly respond to crises. With the support of the majority of Member States, we must now move towards text-based negotiations, which is the only way to advance towards a genuine and consensual solution. We sincerely hope that we can achieve reform of the Security Council, as it would redress the injustice done to Africa, which deserves a permanent place on the Security Council, and should have one.

While all of the themes of the sessions of the General Assembly command our attention, this year's theme, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", challenges us even more. Its implementation also requires adequate representation for all Member States in the bodies of our Organization. In that connection, Burkina Faso calls for universal support for the candidacy of Mr. Brahima Sanou for the post of Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union, in the elections scheduled for the Union's plenipotentiary conference, to be held from 29 October to 16 November in the United Arab Emirates.

Despite its 73 years of existence, our Organization must continue to work to strengthen itself and to assure people of its relevance and importance. Building an equitable world in a peaceful and healthy environment is a shared and long-term undertaking and a responsibility that we all share. Let us therefore trust our Organization, the only framework that enables us to remain united in strong action and that creates greater hopes for the peoples of the world. To that end, I want to pay a well-deserved tribute to a great man and a worthy son of Africa who stood at the helm of our shared Organization. I am referring, of course, to the late Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, I would like to remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and 5 minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al-Kuwari (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the false accusations in the statements of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain (see A/73/PV.14).

The international community realizes full well that the State of Qatar is innocent of all of the accusations that have been made against it, and that it is active at the regional level in combating terrorism and

extremism while promoting peace. We have heard such fake allegations only from the representatives of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. They have never been made by any credible international party, but only by States whose record is full of violations of international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law at the national, regional and international levels.

Surprisingly, the States making such allegations against us do not practice what they preach. The Emirates and Bahrain talk about fighting terrorism and respecting the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their affairs, while in fact they terrorize and suppress civilians, violate human rights and interfere in the internal affairs of other States in a way that undermines international and regional peace and security. That has become evident in their repeated attempts to destabilize security and stability in Qatar. They plotted, financed and supported an unsuccessful 1996 coup in Qatar, and they are currently imposing a blockade on ut. In addition, they continue to terrorize their citizens and keep spreading lies and expecting people to believe them. They are also using modern technology in their attempts to deceive.

The United Arab Emirates was used as a platform for financing the greatest act of terrorism in modern history. It allowed most of the terrorists who perpetrated that act to escape through its territories, as was stated in the official report issued by the Commission on the 11 September events that led to that terrorist attack. While those States claim that they are combating terrorism, we all know that it was their reckless and irresponsible policies that helped to launch terrorism. It is deplorable that our region has witnessed that kind of political gambling.

With regard to the allegations made about my country by the representative of Bahrain, I want to say that its interference in the internal affairs of the State of Qatar reveals a real crisis of leadership in Bahrain. Instead of resolving their internal issues, it seeks to falsify history through lies in the media. Bahrain's record is full of violations and policies of suppression, for which its citizens are paying the price. That makes it ineligible to talk about fighting terrorism and extremism or about human rights. Bahrain would do better to uphold international conventions and respect human rights. It must know for certain that it cannot solve its domestic problems by making fake allegations about other States.

Bahrain should comply with the international calls to it to stop discriminating against and marginalizing its citizens. That leads to the creation of fertile environments enabling extremism and terrorism to spread and causing suffering in the region. The illegal and unilateral measures taken by Bahrain against my country serve only to undermine regional cooperation, which is one of the most important pillars in our efforts to achieve stability and security and combat terrorism and extremism.

It is ironic that the United Arab Emirates is trying to market itself as a factor for stability in the region. It is no secret that the United Arab Emirates has adopted irresponsible policies aimed at undermining its sister States and peoples while destabilizing important regional bodies such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, and disregarding international law as well as the principles of the Charter and of good neighbourliness.

According to United Nations and international reports, the financial sector of the United Arab Emirates has become a safe haven for those seeking to evade financial sanctions imposed by the Security Council, as well as for money-laundering benefiting terrorist organizations. It is known that the United Arab Emirates relies on private mercenary companies to implement its destructive agenda in the region and on espionage companies to terrorize its citizens and intervene in the internal affairs of other States. It has also become known that the United Arab Emirates violates Security Council sanctions, as is evident in the recent reports of the Panels of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1973 (2011), and 2140 (2014). That is the record of the United Arab Emirates at the regional and international levels.

The United Arab Emirates disregards its international commitments. It is spearheading efforts to destabilize security and stability in the Middle East, Africa and beyond and has become a leader in destabilization and destruction activities. Surprisingly, it claims that it sponsors democracy while it punishes its citizens who exercise their freedom of expression with 15 years in prison.

International reports have cited serious human rights violations committed by the Government of the United Arab Emirates. The report of the Group of Regional and International Eminent Experts on Yemen has substantiated appalling and shameful human rights violations perpetrated by United Arab Emirates

personnel. In that regard, we were disgusted to read paragraph 71 of the Group's report (A/HRC/39/43) dealing with war crimes that are unprecedented in our present era.

In July, the International Court of Justice issued a binding decision in which it approved a request by the State of Qatar against the United Arab Emirates regarding its discrimination against Qatari nationals and its violation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The decision stipulated that the United Arab Emirates must first guarantee the reunification of Qatari families that have been divided as a result of measures taken by the Emirates Government; secondly, give Qatari students affected by the United Arab Emirates measures the opportunity to complete their studies in the Emirates or give them their educational records so that they can complete their studies elsewhere; and thirdly, allow the affected Qatari nationals to have access to the courts of the United Arab Emirates.

That decision by our highest international judicial organ is a recognition of the legal correctness of Qatar's position regarding the crisis that has been fabricated against it. It proves the rights of Qatari nationals who have been affected by the unilateral, coercive, illegal and discriminatory measures of the United Arab Emirates, as well as the unjust blockade imposed on Qatar. The obvious question this raises is whether the United Arab Emirates has been respecting human rights and complying with the international conventions that it is party to.

Ms. Gambhir (India): This morning, my delegation came to the Assembly to listen attentively to the new Foreign Minister of Pakistan outline his vision for a new Pakistan (see A/73/PV.14). What we heard instead was about a new Pakistan cast in the mould of the old Pakistan. I am therefore compelled to take the floor to exercise India's right of reply by rejecting the baseless allegations made by the Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

Among the most outrageous and preposterous were allegations relating to the horrifying terror attack on a Peshawar school four years ago. Let me remind the new Government of Pakistan of the outpouring of sorrow and pain in India that followed that massacre of innocent children in 2014. Both houses of India's Parliament expressed solidarity while paying respect to the memory of those killed. Schools all over India observed two minutes of silence in their memory. The despicable insinuation made by the Foreign Minister of Pakistan dishonours the memory of the innocent lives lost to terrorists that day. His was a desperate attempt to look away from the monster of terror that Pakistan has itself created in its quest to destabilize its neighbours, whose territory it covets. Let me make it clear to the new Government of Pakistan that the entire State of Jammu and Kashmir is and will remain an integral part of India.

We have also heard Pakistan claim that it has turned the tide on terrorism. Let us fact-check that statement. Can Pakistan deny the fact that it has chosen to serve as host and patron to 132 of the United Nations-designated terrorists and 22 terrorist entities sanctioned as of today under the sanctions regimes established pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1988 (2011)? Will Pakistan deny that the United Nations-designated terrorist Hafiz Saeed is given free rein inside Pakistan to spew venom and set up candidates for electoral offices?

We have also noted an effort on the part of the new Pakistan to champion human rights. That is vintage verbal duplicity, as is evident in the recent example of Princeton economics professor Atif Mian's appointment to and removal from the Economic Advisory Council of Pakistan on the grounds that he belongs to a minority. Before preaching to the world, the championing of human rights should begin at home.

We also heard today that Pakistan supports a report that no Member State asked for, none supported and on which no action was taken.

The new Foreign Minister of Pakistan chose to term India's reaction to the gruesome killing of some of our security personnel by Pakistani-sponsored terrorists as based on flimsy grounds. While it may not be the case for Pakistan, for India, every loss of life counts. Hence our belief that talks and terror cannot go together.

In conclusion, what we have heard are fake allegations and fake facts, which can only make for a fake vision. For a new vision to materialize, Pakistan must demonstrate that it has moved beyond a narrative of deception, deceit and distortion.

Ms. AlMatrooshi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the false accusations and allegations made by the representative of Qatar in his statement.

It is deplorable that as usual Qatar has chosen to engage in political manoeuvres aimed at exacerbating a crisis rather than respecting its obligations under international law. Instead of focusing on its illegitimate attitudes, which must be addressed, and working in good faith to settle the crisis, Qatar is trying to add an international dimension to that crisis by distorting and misrepresenting the objectives behind the justified and appropriate measures that were taken against Qatar by the United Arab Emirates, with the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Those measures were in response to Qatar's destabilizing actions over the past two decades, including its interference in the internal affairs of Arab States and support for extremist ideologies across the region, as well as the provision of financing and support to terrorist organizations. Those are not only flagrant violations of international law, many Security Council resolutions and multilateral agreements, they also constitute a serious threat to the security and stability of Arab States and many other States throughout the world. We underscore that our measures were taken in response to illegal activities carried out by the Qatari regime. In that regard, we stress that the United Arab Emirates fully respects and appreciates the people of Qatar.

In that regard, the United Arab Emirates has established humanitarian exemptions so that the majority of the Qatari people are not affected by the measures taken against the Qatari regime. The allegations made by Qatar are not based on any factual grounds.

We reject any violation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. We deplore the fact that Qatar has misrepresented the decision of the International Court of Justice regarding the temporary measures. We take this opportunity to underscore that the United Arab Emirates fully complies with the measures decided on by the International Court of Justice. We remind the State of Qatar that the Court has called on both parties to refrain from any action that might exacerbate or prolong the crisis, making resolving it more difficult.

We shall continue to implement our measures against Qatar until we are certain that we are not going to fall victim to its aggressive policies. Qatar must change its attitude.

Mr. Hatem (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the allegations, deceptions and inaccuracies presented by the delegation of the State of Qatar. Four countries in the Arab Gulf region have exercised their sovereign right to boycott Qatar in order to protect their security and stability and to oppose Qatar's interference in their internal affairs.

For decades, Qatar has continued to support and finance terrorist groups, destabilize States' security and stability, support sectarianism and extremism, incite violence, and coordinate with terrorist groups with the aim of overthrowing regimes. The decision by the four States is in exercise of their sovereign right, based on the provisions and principles of international law, to maintain their security and stability.

Qatar's many actions are not limited to the events that took place in Bahrain in 2011. It has supported terrorist groups in Bahrain and elsewhere, while providing them with financial and media support. Bahrain has put up with Qatar's interventions and aggressions, which have been documented historically and internationally. The Kingdom of Bahrain has evidence demonstrating the interference of Qatar in its internal affairs and Qatari attempts to sow chaos, threaten peace and undermine the social fabric of our country.

One of our reasons for severing relations with Qatar is its lack of respect for the sovereignty of other States, as well as its policies targeting States' security and its interference in their internal affairs, contradicting the purposes and principles of the United Nations and provisions of international law. Qatar has sought to disrupt the Gulf Cooperation Council by not respecting its own obligations under the 2013 Riyadh agreement and its implementing mechanism, as well as the 2014 supplementary agreement.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, together with its brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Arab Republic of Egypt, has urged Qatar to abide by the agreed related charters and conventions and to stop supporting and financing terrorism while providing safe haven to terrorists. However, Qatar has preferred to continue supporting terrorism and cooperating with Iran, the main supporter of the terrorism that targets States' security in the Arab Gulf region.

The allegations that our boycott of Qatar has caused human rights violations are not true. The boycotting

States have committed no human rights violations. The Qatari and the Gulf peoples are brothers, and our States want to affirm that fact.

Qatar continues to focus on unrealistic issues and has tried to convince our Qatari brothers and international public opinion that the boycotting States are imposing an economic blockade and violating Qatari human rights. It claims that what the four States have done is a conspiracy that oppresses Qatar. Qatar has focused its foreign policy on three issues: oppression, conspiracy and the blockade. It is Qatar that has committed grave violations of its own citizens' human rights. Qatar withdrew Qatari citizenship from certain people related to the Goufran tribe, while violating the rights of foreign construction workers in Qatar, as stated in a report by the United States State Department.

With regard to Qatar's allegation that a blockade has been imposed against it, all that the four States did was to exercise their sovereign right to close their airspace and territorial waters. That is a sovereign right and does not constitute a blockade as claimed by Qatar. However, its airport and skies are open, and Qatar can continue to carry out import and export activities. The Amir of Qatar has stated in his speeches that Qatar is not affected economically or commercially by the boycott and that its economy continues to grow. Another statement by the Qatari Minister of Economy notes that Qatar has not been harmed by the boycott measures, that all of the items that Qatar needs are available in Qatari markets and that it can undertake import activities by air and sea. All of that contradicts the Qatari allegations that there is an economic blockade and a plot against Qatar. The four States have agreed to open emergency air corridors to and from Qatar in order to safeguard aviation, aircraft and passengers.

What is needed to resolve the crisis with Qatar? It must be understood, first, that the measures taken by the four States are aimed at protecting their security and stability. The core of tne crisis is that Qatar supports and finances extremism and terrorism. Its interference in our internal affairs must change drastically. The four States will then be ready to engage in dialogue with Qatar, if in practice it demonstrates the will to stop supporting and financing terrorism and extremism, disseminating hate speech and incitement and interfering in the internal affairs of the four States, in accordance with the six principles that ensure peace and stability in the region.

Qatar must commit to fully implementing the 2013 Riyadh agreement and the 2014 supplementary agreement, as well as its implementation mechanisms. It must also demonstrate a commitment to engaging responsibly in dialogue with our States in the context of the Kuwaiti endeavours. The measures taken by the four States are sovereign measures aimed at remedying Qatar's behaviour, which seeks to break up the Gulf Cooperation Council, destabilize the security of States in the region, and interfere in their internal affairs, in grave violation of their sovereign rights, which are guaranteed by international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Warraich (Pakistan): I am taking the floor to exercise our right of reply to the statement just made by the representative of India. Her diatribe was a reflection not only of India's deep-seated hostility towards my country but also of the Indian habit of conflating fact with fabrication.

We were treated to another homily against terrorism. Listening to that exposition, one might indeed marvel at the saintly behaviour of our eastern neighbour. But who are more qualified to talk of terrorism than those who practice it as an instrument of State policy? The breeding ground of terrorism in our region is the fascistic Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh centres. The claims of religious superiority are being perpetrated through straight patronage all across India.

Speaking of victims of terrorism, I would like to remind the Indian representative of people such as Danish Rajab, a 24-year-old man from Srinagar, whose pellet-infested face was deprived of vision in the left eye and who tells a story of misfortune that is not unique to him. Asif Amacher, a 10-year-old boy, seeks similar answers from those who took his eyesight. The Indian representative could have spoken of the agony of Farooq Ahmad Dar, who was tied to an army Jeep and driven in front of unarmed Kashmiri protesters to be used as a human shield — or perhaps of Kasir Bhat, who was run over and killed by a military vehicle.

A country such as India — where members of minorities, including Christians and Muslims, are publicly lynched at the hands of Hindu zealots; where the perpetrators of the Samjhauta Express attack in 2007 receive State patronage; where an unabashed Hindu extremist, Yogi Adityanath, who openly advocates the religious superiority of Hindus, serves as the face of the largest Indian state, Uttar Pradesh;

where the right of Bengalis to citizenship in Assam has been arbitrarily rescinded, rendering them suddenly stateless and subjecting them to being called termites by a prominent Indian leader; and where churches and mosques are torched — such a country is surely not qualified to give sermons to others. In the illiberal India of today there is no room for dissent. India's proclivity for violence is also no secret. In the last 70 years, India has been engaged in at least a dozen instances of the use of force against its neighbours and continues to face 17 domestic insurgencies.

As for the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, I would urge the Indian representative to look, for once, beyond obfuscation and denial to answer a few simple questions honestly and objectively. Can India deny the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, which is an internationally recognized dispute on which there exist a number of United Nations resolutions? Can India deny that the United Nations has expressly called for holding an impartial plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the Kashmiri people? Can India deny that more than 100,000 people have been killed in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, a number that is well documented by human rights organizations and the international media? Can India deny that Indian military forces have resorted to the indiscriminate use of force against innocent civilians, causing widespread death and injury? Since the Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir has little claim to legitimacy, the true face of the Indian occupation was exposed yet again by the recent report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which presents a litany of systematic violations of the fundamental human rights of the Kashmiri people.

As much as India may try, credibility cannot be gained by discrediting the truth but rather by facing up to it. The truth is that Jammu and Kashmir is not a part of India. It never was, and it never will be. As for Security Council resolutions, they do not lapse with time, nor are they overtaken by circumstance. Law has no expiration date; morality has no sell-by date.

India cannot hide behind semantics anymore. It can regurgitate hollow allegations against Pakistan of cross-border terrorism, but it cannot hide its egregious State terrorism against the defenceless people in occupied Kashmir. It can arrogantly silence courageous Kashmiri voices such as that of Shujaat Bukhari, but it cannot suppress the voice of the international community, which was articulated in the High Commissioner's report. It can use the might of its guns to keep innocent Kashmiris under its illegal occupation for now, but not forever. The 100,000 Kashmiri dead in occupied Jammu and Kashmir tell an unremitting tale of India's two-facedness. It is time for India to abandon its doublespeak. Reckless rhetoric and phony bravado may win it an election, but they cannot win it peace, nor indeed can they earn India any credibility.

Mr. Al-Kuwari (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): The repeated accusations that we have heard today from the regimes of Abu Dhabi and Bahrain are baseless, and they seek to distort the image of the State of Qatar because they believe that will help to undermine its international relations. The most eloquent response is that during the period in which Qatar has been experiencing that unjust blockade, its international partnerships with many countries and various United Nations bodies have been reinforced.

The State of Qatar has continued to strengthen its activities and initiatives with a view to achieving, among other things, United Nations objectives in countering terrorism and extremism, promoting a culture of peace, engaging in dialogue between civilizations and faiths, encouraging education, enhancing human rights, achieving sustained peace, strengthening cybersecurity, fostering mediation and empowering youth and women.

We all know that the policies of the State of Qatar are based on its commitment to international law and to refraining from any act that could impede efforts to overcome the challenges that the international community is facing. We have therefore exercised self-restraint and made a commitment to dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

On the other hand, both of the regimes in Abu Dhabi and Bahrain have continued their destabilizing policies in the region, as well as their grave violations of human rights. They have failed to present evidence to substantiate their allegations against the State of Qatar, despite calls to do so. That proves that the allegations are fallacious and that the measures based on them embody the failure of those States to deal with differences of opinion. It further proves that their approach is based on assault and incitement, false allegations and a disregard for brotherhood and good neighbourliness as well as the principles of friendly international relations. That is in addition to their disregard for cooperation aimed at strengthening peace, security and stability,

as well as human rights, development and addressing common challenges.

It has become evident that the attempts by the regimes in Abu Dhabi and Bahrain to target Qatar with fabricated allegations are a continuation of the allegations that seek to justify their illegal unilateral measures, including a cybercrime committed by the Emirates. International and credible local entities have agreed that the regime in Abu Dhabi has committed that crime in flagrant violation of international law. That comes at a time when international efforts are being intensified to combat cybercrime, which threatens international peace and security.

Since under the Assembly's rules of procedure I will not be able to ask for the floor again to respond to further allegations after exercising my second right of reply, my country reserves the right to respond in writing, and I request that my response be placed on record.

Ms. Al-Matrooshi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I find myself obliged to respond once again to the repeated allegations made by the representative of Qatar. As we have repeatedly stated, the allegations with regard to piracy and fabricated statements are completely erroneous. All four States reject the claim that they participated in an alleged plot with regard to any cybercrime. They call on the Qatari regime to stop diverting attention from the issue at hand and to begin to change the attitude whereby it seeks to incite terrorism in the region and beyond.

We deplore the fact that Qatar is spreading false information by proclaiming that the diplomatic crisis was caused by a cyberattack. There were no such actions contributing to that escalation. Qatar has been financing extremist groups for the past 20 years. The region is experiencing a period of unprecedented turbulence, and Qatar is trying to make the most of that instability by fomenting extremism.

My country's delegation will not waste its time by responding to the fabrications by the Qatari regime. We have already clarified our dispute with Qatar with our brothers in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab Republic of Egypt. In that regard, I would like to note that the Qatari regime ignores the positive role that the United Arab Emirates has been playing in confronting the tremendous challenges facing the region, some of them caused by Qatar.

The meeting rose at 7.50 p.m.